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THE MIRROR OF SIMPLE AND ANNIHILATED SOULS: A TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH

A thesis submitted to the

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of the University of Cincinnati

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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of the College of Arts and Sciences

1996

by

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UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI

NOVEMBER 30, 19 95

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hereby submit this as part of the requirements for the degree of:

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in THE DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES & LITERATURES

It is entitled THE MIRROR OF SIMPLE AND ANNIHILATED SOULS: A TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH

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Abstract

The Mirror is the first known spiritual text to be written in French, and as such it is surprising to discover that the author is a woman. This translation is an effort to acquaint English-speaking people with an enigmatic devotional text preceded by a lengthy introduction. The introduction is designed to place the Mirror in its proper historic parameters and spiritual dimension of its time. As it is such an early text rooted in the oral tradition containing a variety of mystical traditions, it surprisingly contains a quantity of feminine devotional practices which should be of great interest to a contemporary reader. The notes are designed to indicate biblical or theological allusions and to explain the symbols and encoded language which are woven throughout the text.

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CONTENTS

PREFACE 1

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background and Heresy 11

The Development of Béguine Spirituality 22

The Mirror: Its Oral Tradition and Mystical Dimensions 30

Seven Stages of Spiritual Perfection 38

Multi-dimensionality of the **Miroir** 41

The **Miroir** and the **Kaballa**: A Case of Synchronicity? 47

The Synthesis of Courtly, Chivalric, and Spiritual Conventions 53

The Prophetic Voice 63

The Influence of the **Miroir** on Marguerite de Navarre 73

APPROBATIO 85

THE MIRROR OF SIMPLE SOULS 86

NOTES 227

BIBLIOGRAPHY 244

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PREFACE

It is hoped that the following Introduction to the English translation of the **Miroir** des simples âmes will provide insight into an enigmatic devotional text. In this, the first known spiritual text to be written in French, Marguerite creates a **débat** between Love and Reason for the sake of winning the Soul. Writing in the tradition of Hadewijich and of Mechtild of Magdeberg, Porete traces the spiritual evolution of the Soul, culminating in ecstatic union with God. The **Miroir** becomes a reflection of a dynamic transformation of the Soul as it proceeds paradoxically downward toward its own simplification and annihilation, achieving Divine union, the highest stage of spiritual perfection. The ardor and annihilation of the Soul ironically parallels the author's own tragic end. She was burned at the stake in 1310, her body consumed in fire as her own Soul was consumed by the fire of God's love.

For many centuries Marguerite Porete's work was considered to be an anonymous treatise, and was used as a devotional text in English and Latin, until 1948, when Romana Guarnieri found a fifteenth-century French text which provided evidence of Porete's authorship. Up until that time the **Miroir** was known only by the few remaining manuscripts written in Latin and in Middle English. The

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Latin texts date from the time of her inquisition, and it is thought that they were translated from Marguerite's French manuscripts to provide evidence for her at her trail. The English manuscripts were translated from the French during the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and the translator of one of the important documents is known only as M.N. He is very sympathetic to Porete's work and his glosses are of literary interest in Middle English studies, and to students of medieval spirituality in particular. Yet M.N.'s glossing and paraphrasing of Marguerite's most difficult and poetic passages significantly alter the text, often distorting its meaning and weakening its aesthetic and theological import.

Today's interest in medieval spirituality and feminine devotional practices has given rise to renewed scholarly interest in **Le mirouer des simples âmes**, particularly since Porete's authorship has been generally accepted as genuine. Evidence of current interest in Marguerite Porete is found in the recent publications of Bryant, Dronke, and Petroff, who have each edited anthologies devoted to medieval women's literature. The work of each of these three scholars has profited from the Chantilly manuscript found by Guarnieri. The French Chantilly manuscript was first published privately in 1967 and has not been widely available for scholarship, until it was

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re-issued (Guarnieri, 1986) with critical notes, as a parallel text in Middle French and Latin, using the M.N. translation to provide for gaps in the French and Latin manuscripts.

It is hoped that this modern English translation from the French will be of interest to English-speaking scholars of medieval literature, of the history of mysticism, and of women's studies. What English versions we now possess are translated from the Middle English of M.N. The recent availability of the French and Latin texts invited revision of the English translation. Bryant, Petroff, and Dronke have provided translations of excerpts for the purpose of commentary, but as yet no one has provided a scholarly translation from the French. This translation is based primarily on the Chantilly manuscript, with M.N.'s English or the Latin translations used to fill in the gaps. In addition, the reader's particular attention is called to the notes which follow the translation and are keyed to the individual chapters. They are designed to indicate biblical or theological allusions, to explain difficult phrases or obtuse passages, to show where Marguerite is developing a theme already proposed in the **Miroir**, and to explain the symbols and encoded language which are woven through the text. The notes are intended to complement and embellish

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the text and to offer avenues for future study and investigation.

The accomplishment of this dissertation has involved considerable research and ancillary scholarship, since so little work has been accomplished on Marguerite's behalf. Because the **Miroir** is an allegory whose meaning is carried in a profusion of symbols, the central focus in the Introduction is upon these symbols, although other considerations are addressed, including historical, sociological, and gender issues. My intimate association with the **Miroir** has led me down many avenues of investigation, some of which may appear tangential, but the **Miroir** is a multi-faceted text which can be read on many different levels. It invites its reader to explore a wealth of images, to reflect upon them, to gain access to his or her intuitive faculties and to experience a transformation. My introduction is clearly a representation of this process at work. Some of the questions I will be considering are the following:

1. Why did Marguerite write the **Miroir** and what is its historical background? The text provides strong echoes of Dyonysius the Aeropagite and of the Cistercians, Bernard de Clairvaux and Guillaume de St. Thierry. There is evidence that Marguerite was familiar also with the Victorine school, particularly Richard and Hugh. This section traces the sources of her inspiration

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and places her in an historical and political context in which her orthodoxy would be challenged.

2. Was Marguerite Porete a béguine? Both Margaret Doiron and Romana Guarnieri have accused Porete of being both a béguine and a heretic, although more recent scholarship has been more kind to her theology, seeing her as a visionary who was branded a heretic in a complicated conspiracy between the Church and State to suppress the Templars. Both John Duns Scotus and Meister Eckhart were accused of heresy at the same time as Marguerite. They survived and she didn't.

3. How does the **Miroir** fit in the oral tradition and what are its mystical dimensions? Marguerite's **Miroir** is one of many medieval and contemporary texts called "mirrors." As much scholarship has already been accomplished on the mirror topos, I will discuss the mirror convention as it relates to spiritual reflections of both the Soul and of Love, two of the major allegorical voices in the text.

4. How do the seven stages of spiritual perfection provide a ladder for spiritual growth? Marguerite was not alone in using the ladder convention to express the various stages of spiritual growth. I examine how she integrates the symbols of the troubadour ethos of **fin'amors** with chivalric symbols and conventions,

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infusing them with her ideal spiritual conception of divine love.

5. While Marguerite's use of the ladder convention suggests a linear approach to spiritual evolution, the text demonstrates a multi-dimensionality of thought and language, which Luce Irigaray has demonstrated to be a characteristic of the feminine consciousness. In this section I provide examples of how Marguerite's use of symbols and encoded language enables her reader to follow the process she herself had to undergo in order to write at all. Her use of symbols enables her to touch genuine feelings and intuitions, thereby renouncing the dominant patriarchal structures, and elevating the process to a level of universality.

6. The **Kabbalia**, the foremost mystical text of the Jewish tradition, was composed at the same time as the **Miroir** and is <u>also</u> a product of a patriarchal hierarchy. Like the **Miroir**, it was considered a dangerous text, one to be read only by the spiritually adept. It is a secret text whose language is highly encoded. This section broadly outlines the similarities which exist between the two mystic traditions--one Christian, one Jewish. These similarities provide an interesting case of synchronicity which invites further discussion.

7. The **Miroir**, although primarily a devotional text, represents a fusion of the courtly, chivalric, and

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spiritual conventions. In this section I discuss three of the themes which unite these conventions: First, the legend of Alexander which combines both chivalric and courtly themes in a spiritual context; second, the use of genealogy and lineage to confer human and divine nobility; and third, Marguerite's understanding of the terms **franchise** (freedom) and **marriz** (errant, wayward, blemished) in their social and religious contexts in the **Miroir**.

8. Was Marguerite a heretic or a prophet? This section discusses Marguerite's role as a feminine prophetic voice in her time. The seminal works of Caroline Walker Bynum suggest that the charismatic gifts of prophesy and visions in the writing of women gave them a voice which was denied them in the priestly functions of presiding over the Eucharist or proclaiming the Gospel. I will demonstrate that Marguerite was indeed a prophetic voice, and that her expository style is transformed as the work progresses and her spirituality evolves. The **Miroir** thus becomes a reflection of a dynamic transformation of the soul as it proceeds paradoxically downward toward its own annihilation and achieves union with the Divine, the highest stage of spiritual perfection.

9. Evidence for the **Miroir**'s sustained influence on mystical thought is not extensive, but it is clear that

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it had a direct influence on Queen Marguerite de Navarre of the sixteenth century. In this section, the **Miroir** is considered as a primary source for Queen Marguerite's **Prisons**. I will suggest that the inspiration for the prison allegory came directly from the **Miroir** and will demonstrate how the mystical rapture related by Queen Marguerite in the third book of the **Prisons** replicates, compliments, and reinvents Marguerite Porete's own experience. Furthermore, the structure of the **Prisons** is discussed in order to demonstrate how the prison allegory is patterned on the structure of the **Miroir**.

It is my intention to consider the **Miroir** as a literary and historical text, even though it is primarily a theological treatise. I intend to avoid esoteric theological debate (for which I am unqualified) and concentrate instead on the network of symbols Marguerite used to embellish her text. As such it is hoped that this dissertation will provide a helpful tool to English-speaking students of medieval feminist spirituality and offer some new insights into a text which has long been neglected and obscured.

At this time I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Heather Arden, Professor of French Language and Literature at the University of Cincinnati, who has been

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a constant source of encouragement and insight. As my thesis advisor she has been patient and diligent, and this dissertation has greatly benefited from her experience and extensive knowledge.

I am equally indebted to Dr. Elizabeth Armstrong, Professor of English of the same university, who first introduced me to the Middle English version of the **Miroir** and encouraged me to find a French manuscript when I complained about the difficulty of the Middle English script. Her extensive knowledge of medieval spirituality and her helpful suggestions have been invaluable.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge Dr. Jean-Charles Seigneuret, also at the same university, for his help in decoding the initial chapters of the **Miroir** and for his continued support in bringing this work to fruition.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical Background and Heresy

Marguerite Porete was a French mystic and poet who was burned at the stake in 1310. Her work, **Le miroir des simples âmes**, was judged to be heretical and all copies ordered burned or otherwise destroyed in what Henry Charles Lea calls "the first formal auto-da-fé of which we have cognizance at Paris" (2:123). For many centuries the **Miroir** was attributed to other more respectable mystics or thought to be anonymous, and was used as a devotional text in English, Italian, and Latin, until 1946, when Romana Guarnieri announced her discovery of a 60,000-word Middle French manuscript of the **Miroir** providing evidence of Porete's authorship. Up until that time the **Miroir** was known only by the few remaining manuscripts written in Latin, Italian, and Middle English. The Latin tests date from the time of Marguerite Porete's trial and inquisition by Guillaume de Paris during the reign of Philippe le Bel, and it is thought that they were translated to provide evidence against her at her trial. The English manuscripts were translated from the French during the fifteenth century, and the translator of the most important English document is known only as M.N. His careful glossing of the text marks him as sympathetic and apologetic reader of Marguerite's work and its potentially heretical content, and

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the text (ed. by Doiron) is of literary interest in Middle English studies and to students of medieval spirituality in particular.

What little is known of Marguerite Porete's life comes from her own writings and from the records of her inquisition in 1310, which are published in Latin and partially translated into French by Paul Verdeyen. Prior to her inquisition, she was brought before Bishop Guy of Colmieu at Valenciennes. The **Miroir** was condemned as heretical before his ecclesiastical court and was publicly burned in her presence in 1306. Although warned to no longer disseminate the book or its contents, she apparently continued to do so, for she was again brought before the new bishop of Cambrai, Philip of Marigny, and the Inquisitor of Lorraine and was accused of still circulating copies of her book (Verdeyen 52). In an effort to garner influential support, Marguerite relates that she gave copies to three clerics whom she believed were sympathetic to her cause. These three clerics were a Friar Minor named John (de Querayn according to the Doiron version), a Cistercian named Frank of the Abbey of Villiers in Brabant, and finally the famous theologian Godfrey of Fontaines, who was from Flanders and was a former regent of the University of Paris. Of these theologians Guarnieri writes: "The selection could not have been more judicious or more complete: a representative of the most advanced and modern movements, a

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exponent of the scholastics and the secular clergy. The three attestations they wrote have an authentic and sincere tone and are important testimony in favor of Marguerite. At the same time, they throw light on the divisions existing in mysticism" ("Il movimento" 638). While the Cistercian's approval is without reserve, the other two clerics approved the Miroir's content with the proviso that it should be read only by those who are well-advanced on the path of perfection.

From Valenciennes she was then sent to Paris to be examined by the Dominican Inquisitor where she refused to answer any questions and to take the vows necessary for her examination. The court documents refer to her as "a béguine from Hainaut" (a region south of Flanders and Brabant, today part of France and Belgium), and state that she was excommunicated and imprisoned for eighteen months (a period of time generally granted to the accused for reflection). During that time she refused to respond to her accusers who had extracted a list of articles from her book and had submitted them out of context to the theological regents of the University of Paris. Gwendolyn Bryant, who has studied these articles in relation to the text, concludes that Marguerite's doctrinal heresy has not been proven: "As a Free Spirit, she was deemed guilty of pantheism and antinomianism. Pantheism she did advocate, but accusations of antinomianism seem unfounded" (208). Her refusal to give

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testimony to what probably seemed to her a list of trumped up charges before a kangaroo court made her guilty of "relapse" because her refusal to recant meant that she was not absolved and could not take communion for over a year (Verdeyen 64). Of the list of thirty articles, fifteen were deemed heretical, and the list, followed by refutations by Church fathers, has been published by Guarnieri ("Il **movimento**"). Although accused, Marguerite was not actually convicted of heresy by the inquisition, but of "relapse" into heresy for she had ostensibly abjured her heresies by her presence at the book-burning in Valenciennes. Her failure to respond now to her accusers made her offense all the more deplorable, and she was condemned as a "relapsed heretic." She was transferred to the secular courts and on June 1, 1310, she was burned at the stake at the Place de Grève in Paris. A contemporary witness, the continuer of the **Chronicon** of William of Nangis, tells that her nobility of bearing and her devotion as whe went to the stake led many who were present to weep (cited in Bryant 205). All copies of her text were ordered to be destroyed under punishment of excommunication.

Apart from the sparse biographical details reported in her trial proceedings, we can estimate her birth at around 1250 in the cities of Hainaut or of Valenciennes, where the first trial occurred. Although she writes in French, an attentive reading of the **Miroir**, according to Longchamp,

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reveals numerous Flemish idioms, suggesting a bilingual culture and formation. She may even have spoken Flemish, in view of her extensive knowledge of Flemish mysticism. There is a remote possibility that she was connected to the Cathar movement, many of whose former **perfectae** joined the béguines toward the end of the thirteenth century (Lerner 76). Porete would have been a member of the Diocese of Cambrai, which stretched eastward from Anvers to the border of Cologne and southward to the outskirts of Paris (Longchamp 22). Her text reveals an author of considerable intellectual development and poetic accomplishment, which leads to the assumption that she benefited from some formal education and was most probably a member of the upper class. "Almost all the known educated women from Antiquity to the sixteenth century A.D. were members of the nobility" (Lerner 23), and Porete's book contains frequent implicit references to numerous and varied traditions: the Latin Patriarchy, secular courtly love, and béguine spirituality. Moreover, she has sufficiently mastered the art of scholastic debate to mimic and mock it simultaneously, while demonstrating an impressive aptitude for Biblical exegesis as well. Yet, like most medieval mystical writers, she constantly refers to her own ignorance and unworthiness, invoking the humility **topos** (Lerner 51), which heightens the impact of her divine inspiration.

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Marguerite had only one supporter during the time of her imprisonment, Guiard of Cressonessart, described as a bégard and as a cleric from the diocese of Beauvais. His association with Marguerite led the inquisitors to suspect him also of heresy, but he was released because he had written no doctrine which would incriminate him (Verdeyen 55). Unlike Marguerite, Guiard did eventually testify at his trial, and among other incriminating statements he claimed that he was the Angel of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-8) sent by Christ to save the faithful adherents of the true Church. Before his inquisitors he openly espoused the doctrine of the dichotomy between the Greater and Little Church reminiscent of the Cathar heresies and echoing the prophesies of Joichim of Fiore. He claimed that he had the keys to the former, and that while the Pope may have the keys to the Little Church, he and his ministers do not have authority over it. His voice is more militant than Marguerite's, who in Chapter 43 of the **Miroir** also speaks of the Great and Little Churches, but in a spiritual sense. The Little Holy Church is guided by Reason and must be led by the Greater Church which is guided by Love. This theme frequently reappears in the **Miroir**:

> (Love): Holy church, indeed, you are beneath this Holy Church! For such Souls are more properly called Holy Church since they sustain and nourish the whole

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> church. And they are not alone, for the Holy Trinity is with them, and this is true, without any doubt. (Ch. 43)

Guiard declares himself openly against the enemies of the Lord, and in admitting that many of these enemies are within the Church, he sets himself beyond Papal and ecclesiastical authority. While claiming his support for Marguerite and subjected to imprisonment at the same time as she, Guiard appears to have had his own revolutionary and apocalyptical agenda which is foreign to the spiritual writings of Marguerite.

The question of whether or not Marguerite was guilty of heresy is still open to debate. Colledge and Guarnieri are of the opinion that the **Miroir** is a work of heresy, "written by a teacher of false doctrine skilled in concealing her unorthodoxy behind ambiguity and imprecision" (cited in Dorion 381-2). Conversely, Lambert writes that without the support of a convent an unattached woman would not be allowed to propagate her work:

> Heresy, then, in this case, if it existed at all, was of special character, concerned solely with the condition of mystical adepts at an advanced stage of perfection; there was no advocacy of libertarianism and disregard of the moral law for anyone, and the

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accusations against Porete gave an unfair picture of her views. (177-8)

Historian Robert Lerner also finds that her alleged deviations from orthodoxy are still within the realm of accepted mystical thought. With Lambert, he contends that her persecution was due to the fact that she was uncloistered and happened to be tried at a time when, for his own political reasons unrelated to Marguerite, King Philippe had to demonstrate his orthodox zeal. Lerner thinks that she was an arbitrary victim of this political necessity when Bishop Marigny, her accuser and also a close advisor to King Philippe, misinterpreted certain passages in her book as an attack on the King. Offering a collary to this political struggle, Verdeyen suggests a conspiracy theory which sets the King, Pope, and episcopacy in a power struggle over doctrine and lay religious expression. His study of the inquisition proceedings presents her as a silent and powerless victim of the Church, asserting its authority over non-canonical doctrine and vernacular texts, and the State, vying for control of sectarian groups such as the Knights Templar, coming together as a tri-partrite coalition of King, episcopacy and Pope, to suppress the partisans of the growing Free Spirit movement (84-5). Some of the inquisitors chosen for Marguerite's trial had already proved their loyalty to church and crown

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as canonical witnesses against the Templars, and were later rewarded with choice bishoprics (59). Almost immediately following Marguerite's trial the laws against heresy were codified under Pope Clement V, in the Council of Vienne (1311-12), which would condemn northern mysticism in general, and more particularly Meister Eckhart's and that of the **Miroir**, confusing it with the derivations of the Free Spirit Sects. It further prompted the dissolution of many béguine sects, giving the Church the legal clout it needed to punish heresy and false doctrine. Yet the béguines continued to flourish. Later under Pope John XXII the béguines of Anvers were placed under ecclesiastic protection, while in France the béguines were protected under royal patronage.

Like so many other writers in the mystical tradition, Marguerite felt compelled to express her experience in written form to provide a model to others who were drawn to a life of contemplation. Yet, like the others, she expresses the inadequacy of human language to describe an authentic encounter with God.

We find echoes of the Northern mystics, especially Hadewjich and of Mechtild of Magdeberg, in her writing, who are associated with the béguine tradition. We can assume that Marguerite uses this tradition as a point of departure for her work. She assigns to herself the title of a "beggar woman" whose soul is tranformed as a result of her divine

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encounter. She uses this term in the following quotation which also provides the most concise expression of her purpose in writing the book:

> And so this beggar woman set out to find him [God] there, and she thought she would write about God in the way she wanted to find him in his creatures. And this beggarly woman wrote what you hear. She hopes her neighbors can find God in her, in her writings, and in her words. (Ch. 96; all translations of the Miroir are mine)

Yet, as a result of her transformation she loses her individuality, and she firmly distances herself from any affiliation except that of God himself. Once the Soul is freed of the fetters that bound it to the world of reason it breaks into a song celebrating that freedom:

> Beloved, what will the béguines
> And the pious people say,
> When they hear the excellence
> Of your divine song?
> The béguines say I err,
> So priests, clerics and preachers,
> Augustines, carmelites
> And friars too,

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Because I write of the state
of perfected Love,
Without keeping their Reason
which makes them speak thus to me. (Ch. 122)

Apart from the considerable influence of the béguines upon her work, the text shows the influence of other writers as well. There is evidence which places Meister Eckhart in Paris during the time of her trial and inquisition (Orcibal 40), and the great theologian and "Marian Doctor," John Duns Scotus, was also in Paris at that time just before mysteriously leaving for Cologne in 1307 (Wolter 24). From the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the writings of the Victorines and of the Cistercians, St. Bernard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry are clearly echoed in Marguerite's spirituality, and these influences are more clearly explained in the notes. In modern times, Guarniari, McDonnell and Babinsky have each firmly associated her with the béguines and the Free Spirit movement which centered around the Rhineland, Flanders and Northern France, but it is inconclusive whether or not Marguerite herself was a béguine. Nevertheless, the béguine influence is significant enough to merit a closer inspection, and since so little is known of Marguerite's life, we can only speculate upon her béguine formation.

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The Development of Béguine Spirituality

The béguines developed during the early thirteenth century as a popular lay movement of both men and women (Little 5-6). The Cistercian movement was already flourishing, and a corresponding growth took place in the lay communities, supplementing the convents which could not contain all the aspirants. Many middle and lower class women could not afford the dowries required by the convents, and the béguinages offered young, single women a place where they could earn their living as "spinsters" in the craft of woolworking (Bryant 206). Pious men and women joined together in community to practice devotional exercises and revive the apostolic simplicity of the early church. Many were of noble birth and chose to leave their homes to enter a contemplative life. While some chose to remain cloistered from the dangers of the world, others worked outside the béguinages teaching and doing sacrificial acts of charity and manual labor (McDonnell 5).

The origin of the term "béguine" is not known and there are four possible etymological derivations (Bryant 205). It may derive from the Middle English term for beggar, **beggere**, or from **al-BIGEN-sis**, a heresy taking its name from the town of Albi. It may derive from Lambert Le Bégue, a twelfth century priest who supervised pious circles in Liege (McDonnell 365), or from the color **beige** or **bege** of the robes worn by béguines and bégards. The béguine sects were

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primarily composed of women who joined together to lead an intensive spiritual life beyond the confines of the established church hierarchy. Their influence was most strongly felt during the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, and their increasing strength made them vulnerable to civil and religious persecution. During the thirteenth century the béguinages received both ecclesiastical and royal support. Although the béguines were in charge of their own chapters, they were dependent upon male clergy for preaching and presiding over the mass. It is known that Meister Eckhart preached in the vernacular to bégards and béguines as well as to nuns and brothers in monasteries. An unnamed nun referred to him as the "wise Meister Eckhart who speaks of nothingness; whoever does not understand it, in him divine illumination has never shown" (McDonnell 359). Eckhart was brought before the Inquisition for preaching to the uneducated, "profaning the high scholastic tradition and by appealing directly to the uneducated" (357). Even though they were forbidden to do so, there is evidence that women preached, heard confessions and even blessed one another (344). There is evidence that such women has access to biblical texts. The **Historia scholastica** (c.1170) of Petrus Comestor was a collection of biblical, apocryphal and legendary elements that was widely available in the vernacular as a biblical and scriptural source (Morey). As one of the principal monastic activities

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was to copy manuscripts, this function was also performed in the béguinages which became centers of literacy and of spiritual formation. McDonnell documents the economic and spiritual ties which were developing during the twelfth century in the Lowland Countries, Germany and Northern France. Close trade relations, overlapping feudal jurisdictions, and interlacing ecclesiastical organizations provided a network in which spiritual and intellectual ideas could be freely exchanged (295). Béguine communities established throughout this area were centers of mystical activity which in turn attracted the attention of Dominican and Cistercian monks. Although very little is known of the contents of their libraries, it is known that béguines and bégards composed much of their own devotional literature in the vernacular, much of which was destroyed by the fourteenth-century Inquisition (366).

It is very possible that Marguerite's spiritual formation was guided by the béguines. Her thought is complementary to those who were known to be béguines, and she was described as one in the course of her trial. Yet in her text, Marguerite clearly disavows this association (Ch. 122) and distances herself from the béguines, maintaining that her inspriation comes directly from God. The term "béguine" seems to have registered a pejorative connotation for Marguerite by the time she wrote the **Miroir**. Although repeatedly admitting to being a "beggar," her meaning

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implies a spiritual poverty and indebtedness to God rather than moral laxity and licentious abandon. Nevertheless, her critics have been harsh and unrelenting. McDonnell writes: "She must have been an unattached beguine, with no fixed residence, regarding mendicancy as a means of livelihood, pursuing a life of moral laxity, and refusing to submit to authority" (367). This picture of a wanton libertine contrasts sharply with the literate and genteel author of the **Miroir** who so courageously refused to submit to her enemies, and Bryant accuses McDonnell of "assuming the same untenable position as did the Church in its vain attempt to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' Beguines" (206). Less judgmental in his appraisal, the renowned mystic Evelyn Underhill in 1911 esteemed the newly discovered Middle English text "a new star [in] the galaxy of the mystics," "an advanced text-book of the contemplative life" (345). While lavishly praising the text itself, Underhill is sensitive to the difficult task of mystical expression and of the constant peril of being misunderstood:

> [S]He goes on to touch the cardinal difficulty which has ever dogged all writers upon mysticism: the absolute impossibility of making mystic truth seem real to those who have no experience of the mysteic life. It has been said that only mystics can write

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about mysticism. It were truer to say that only mystics can read about it. (347)

Marguerite is genuinely courteous and solicitous fo her audience, referring to the "petits" (Ch. 43) as those who are novices or uninitiated in the paths of contemplation. She has less patience with theologians and other clerics:

You will not be able to understand it,
(However clever your clerics be)
If you do not proceed humbly
And let Love and Faith,
The mistresses of the house,
Lead you to transcend Reason. (Opening poem)

She frequently uses the term "glose" to refer to the teaching, or higher spiritual meaning of a term which can be understood only by the few, the liberated or annihilated souls. In addressing her hearer/reader she assumes that they will have achieved various levels of understanding, and she refrains from labeling any baptized person as damned or rejected. In Chapter 121 the Holy Trinity lyrically speaks to the Soul telling her that even those governed by Reason will go to heaven: "Reason and Desire govern them with Fear and strong Volition/ Know this, O daughter I've chosen,/ That to them is heaven given." Marguerite demonstrates her

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nobility in her patient tolerance of those whom she is instructing, she is constantly critical of those human faculties which divert the Soul from the pure knowledge of God. In this respect she is considerably more tolerant than her detractors.

Her nihilism which so offended the Church, her contemplative path to divine illumination, consists of the **via negativa** in the annihilation of the will, knowledge, and desire which must be accomplished before the Soul is illuminated and totally absorbed by Divine Love. She is clearly familiar with the Dionysian paradoxes of the unknown God: "God is unknowable and beyond the reach of mind or reason, but we can know Him as the divine cause of all things throught the symbols and images which are projected out from him. To get to the cause of all things we must deny all things through knowledge and unknowing" (**Divine Names** 869D, 872A). She exemplifies this tradition with William of St. Thierry who wrote, "That (divine) knowledge is best known in the life by unknowing; the highest knowledge that a man can here and now attain consists in knowing in what way he does not know" (**On Contemplating God** 7:7).

The argument continues over whether Marguerite was a heretic or a prophet, and it is apparent that the line between the two is arbitrary, depending greatly upon timing and political conditions. Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179)

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succeeded in daringly speaking out against the Church because her prophetic gift had been officially sanctioned by the Pope. While Hildegard spoke out in the name of the "living light," Marguerite also disguised her utterances in the person of Divine Love, but without sufficient ecclesiastical protection. By the beginning of the fourteenth century the jurisdictions of church and state had become sufficiently powerful to silence her voice and overcome the approbation of the three theologians who approved her text.

Although all copies of her text were ordered to be destroyed under punishment of excommunication, this proscription was late in coming, for the **Miroir** had already known a degree of public acclaim and had probably already been translated into Italian (Humiliata, a contemporary of Marguerite, claims she was inspired by the **Miroir** [Dunn]. The **Miroir** was widely read in the English charterhouses and continued to be influential during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Zum Brunn 148).

Although only one manuscript of the French original is available for scholarship, there are thirteen other medieval translations, three English, five Latin, and five Italian which attest to the prevailing spiritual interest of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The French manuscript (Condé F XIV 26 from Chantilly) is the least corrected and abridged, and is written in a single

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hand (Guarnieri vii) and probably dates from the late fifteenth century. Of the thirteen translations only one English and four Latin seem to translate directly from the French, and the others retranslate the Latin or English. For the purposes of this translation, I am indebted to Romana Guarnieri's publication of the Chantilly manuscript with a parallel translation of the three Latin versions from **Corpus Christianorum**, Continuatio mediaevalis 69, 1986) for the basic text. In cases where the text is missing (Chapters 134-137), I have used the Middle English translation of Clare Kirchberger. A modern French translation of the Chantilly Manuscript by Max Huot de Longchamp has been an invaluable resource in deciphering the enigmas of this difficult text, and my gratitude for his scholarship is expressed in the notes. At the time of this writing, I am aware that two other English translations are in process, the long-anticipated edition of Edmund Colledge, and another by Ellen Babinsky. It is hoped that these new English translations, along with my own endeavor, will offer the English-speaking public an opportunity to experience a text which Kurt Ruh describes as a "religious testimony of incomparable originality" (**Neues Handbuch** 589).

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The Mirror: Its Oral Tradition and Mystical Dimensions

> If God has given you his high creation, his excellent light and his exceptional love, be fruitful and multiply this creation without fail, for his two eyes look upon you unceasingly, and if you reflect and regard it well, this regard make the Soul simple.

It is with these words that Marguerite Porete ends her mystical treatise, the **Miroir**, a text which personifies the love of God, who leads the humble and contrite Soul on a spiritual pilgrimage into the perfection of Divine union. She develops the "mirror" topos on many different levels, the first of which is that of the book as a reflection of the soul, which in turn mirrors Divine Love and becomes simplified through reflection. Yet, on another level, the **Miroir** is a product of the twelfth and thirteenth century renaissance which curiously reflects back to us an era in which people were striving to lead more perfect religious lives in a climate of reform, and to express their devotional experience and pass it on to others.

A mirror offers a reflection, but not necessarily a perfect reproduction of the image it represents. Marguerite set out to write her **Miroir** at a time in which Latin was the preferred language for spiritual and theological treatises and French was the tongue of the common people and

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considered not suitable for religious writings. It is significant that the **Miroir** is the first devotional text written in the vernacular in France, and that it was written by a woman, for thirteenth-century women were generally denied the educational opportunities offered to the few privileged men who were instructed in the monasteries or cathedral schools. Very few women were schooled in Latin and if a woman learned the psalter and the office she was considered literate, even though she may not have been able to read or write. As most learning was transmitted orally, the **Miroir** is addressed to the "hearers," not the readers of the book (Ch. 13), and the text was most probably intended to be read aloud in a cloistered setting.

The **Miroir** has been known for years as an anonymous text, and its authorship has only been recently verified by twentieth-century scholarship. Marguerite purposefully attributed its authorship to the person of Love who leads the Soul through a series of seven stages, the highest of which is perfection, leading to mystical union with the Godhead. The Love of God looks upon the Soul, which is Marguerite's personification of herself, and sees her in her creaturely nature. The Love of God then informs and leads the Soul through a series of seven stages, the highest of which is perfection, leading to mystical union with the Godhead. The Love of God looks upon the Soul, which is Marguerite's personification of herself, and sees her in her

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creaturely nature. The Love of God then informs and leads the Soul through the various contemplative stages. The person of Love is thus a reflection of the pure divinity of God which is gradually revealed to the Soul through the questioning of Reason. The book, in turn, provides an example of a perfected Soul which can be used by another "hearer" as a pattern for his or her own spiritual formation and evolution.

It is not surprising that Marguerite chose the mirror as the topos to reveal her spiritual reflections, for the mirror was commonly used in medieval literature to reflect history, nature, or morality, or as a didactic tool to reveal a certain aspect of reality to a spectator or reader. In Marguerite's case, the mirror is more than a reflection of reality, for the mirror reflects not only the image of the Soul, but it also allows the Soul to see God through the agency of Divine Love. Going back to classical times the Narcissus figure stands as a paradigm of the problematic quest for self-knowledge through love (Nightingale 52). Plato writes of the lover as a mirror in whom one beholds oneself (**Phaedrus** in The Dialogues 255), and St. Paul, borrowing from the classical tradition, redefined love's transformation in spiritual terms, "seeing through a glass darkly," thus providing future generations of mystical writers a motif to kindle their spiritual imaginations: "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the

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glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

Bearing in mind that medieval authors cited others as a subtle but accepted form of respect, the writers of the twelfth and thirteenth century borrowed liberally from their antecedents and from one another as well. The writings of St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) offer a significant contribution to the metaphysics of exemplarism in his conception of the world as a mirror reflecting God extrinsically on the one hand, and in the soul, as an intrinsic image of the Trinity on the other. St. Bonaventure leads the reader on an inner journey into the depths of the memory, understanding, and will where the light of truth provides the illumination of the reflection of God. While Alan of Lille (c. 1128-1202) considered nature as a mirror to mortality, Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141) writes of Holy Scripture as a mirror of God. The writings of Marguerite of Oingt (d. 1310), a contemporary of Marguerite Porete, demonstrate that she, too, made use of the mirror as a revelatory device for her visionary experiences. While it is not known if these writers were specifically known to Marguerite Porete, we may assume that the content of many of these writers' works was widespread through the oral tradition and that the mirror convention was accessible to a lay audience, informed of the

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courtly traditions and infused with the lyrics of the poetry of **fin'amors**.

As we consider the **Miroir** as a product of the oral tradition, its significance as a book becomes all the more apparent. Books were written and copied by hand, often beautifully illuminated and very expensive. As only a small minority of people were literate, it was not unusual for people to commit large amounts of literature to memory such as the **Chanson de Roland** or the psalter and other religious litanies. Some of the passion plays took days to perform, large parts of which were committed to memory. The **Miroir** is composed as a **débat**, a dialogue in the Boethian tradition, in which the main speakers are Love, Reason, and the Soul. In many ways it resembles a play, yet there is no evidence that it was intended to be performed by a group of players. As the Soul is instructed by Love through the questioning of Reason, other allegorical speakers such as Fine Love, the Virtues, and Discernment are introduced into the dialogue to emphasize a specific aspect of Love. One cannot help but think of the allegorical debate of the **Roman de la rose**, which elevated love to an art form. At times the inspiration of the speakers provokes them into a lyrical exposition, and the narrative breaks forth into song, strongly reminiscent of the lyrical poetry of Hadewijch and Mechtild of Magdeburg, who precede Marguerite by a generation, and whose béguine spirituality closely resembles

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that of the **Miroir**. Like her predecessors, Marguerite engages her reader/hearer in a deeply personal spiritual dialogue, a mystical encounter with the divine.

Entering into the mystical dimension of the **Miroir** involves much more than silently reading the words printed on a piece of parchment. In the Middle Ages books were to be heard **and** read, and we may have sacrificed much in our departure from the oral tradition. The narrator of the **Miroir** is Love, who asks the Soul to write down the words of the book. The recipient of these words is addressed as the hearer, not as reader, and the authorship is given over to God in the person of Love, and not Marguerite, herself.

This biblical notion of "the Word becoming flesh" is inherent in Marguerite's text. A mystical reading of the **Miroir** thus involves a conscious engagement of the Self with the dialogue between the Soul, Love and Reason. Many avenues of human spirituality are explored. Although the stages of Spiritual Perfection suggest a linear progression of one through seven, the exposition of these stages occurs in a random, non-linear progression, and the Soul's evolution through contemplative reflection is constantly reflecting or referring back upon itself. In Chapter 6 the soul announces that she has taken leave of the Virtues, and this is repeated by Love in Chapter 66:

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De ce, dit Amour, que elle a prins congé de vous et aux oeuvres des Vertuz. Car quant ceste Ame fut en amour emmantellee, que elle print leçon, que elle commence a lire la ou vous prenez vostre fin; mais ceste leçcon n'est mie mise en escript de main d'omme, mais c'est du Saint Esperit, qui escript ceste leçon merveilleuse-ment, et l'Ame est parchemin precieusement; la est tenue la divine escole, a bouche close, que sens humain ne peut mectre en parole.

[She is joyful] because she has taken leave of you and of the works of the Virtues. For when this Soul first put on the mantle of Love, she learned a lesson in your school by desiring the works of the Virtues. Now she is so well-versed and advanced in holy teaching, she is beginning to read where you will come to your end. But this lesson is not written down in human hand but by the Holy Spirit, who writes this lesson miraculously, upon the Soul who is its precious parchment. This divine school is within her and her mouth is closed, for the human mind cannot express it in words.

Yet we find that neither the Soul nor the Virtues are yet silenced, and the Soul is once again languishing under the

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dominion of the Virtues in Chapter 78. This is also true for the personification of Reason. While in Chapter 36 Reason submits to Love completely, she nevertheless dies a lingering death and is not ultimately silenced until the end of the book. It seems that the author needs to maintain these personifications for the sake of the **débat**, while the Soul has gone beyond them. The Soul persists in referring back to her former states in order to provide a contrast with what she has beocme. One contemplation leads to another, one symbolic interpretation suggests another, and the spiritual evolution of the Soul leads it to explore a wealth of analogies, some of which are biblical, others suggest the spiritualization of courtly love and chivalric conventions, and still others refer to the teachings of St. Augustine and most probably of Sts. Bonaventure, Bernard and William of St. Thierry.

These analogies are discussed in the following section which summarizes the spiritual evolution suggested by the text. Further, I will examine some of her writings which demonstrate the integration of the troubadour ethos of **fin'amors** and the chivalric conventions into Marguerite's ideal conceptualization of Divine Love. Finally there will be a brief discussion of Marguerite's role as a feminine prophetic voice in her time.

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The Seven Stages of Spiritual Perfection

The spiritual ladder to perfection, like the mirror, is a common motif in the writings of medieval mystics. An early application of the ladder is found in the Benedictine Rule which outlined a series of twelve steps moving upward toward perfection. Alain of Lille's **Art of Preaching** enumerates seven steps on the progress of a catholic man in his ascent from the beginning of faith to development into a perfected man. It is also found in St. Bonaventure's **Mind's Road to God** which provides six stages of ascension in which the soul ascends from the depths to the height of mystical union with God. Later the tradition is further developed in Walter Hilton's **Ladder of Perfection** (**Speculum** in Latin), who continued the theme of growth toward spiritual maturity. Borrowing from St. Thomas and St. Bernard (and conceivably also from Marguerite too), St. John of the Cross (d. 1591) also explains the ten steps on the ladder of Divine Love (**Dark Night of the Soul**, Bk. II, chs. 19 and 20). Although Marguerite does not use the term "ladder" **per se**, she does conceive of a series of seven states or beings (**estres**) through which a Soul must pass before achieving perfection. A diagram of her contemplative states follows on pp. 37-38 which provides the essential attributes and conditions appropriate to each state. The diagram is adapted from Longchamp's French edition and is chiefly derived from chapters 91, 95, and 118 of Marguerite's text, but it

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includes many of her allegorical and anagogical reflections which are scattered throughout the **Miroir**. It demonstrates the richness of her language in biblical and courtly vocabulary.

The Soul becomes the beloved of God, the King who beckons to her from his secret chamber on the holy mountain. The bridal metaphor is derivative of the imagery of the **Song of Songs** and of Psalm 45:

"Hear, O daughter; consider and listen closely;
forget your people and your father's house.
The king will have pleasure in your beauty;
he is your master; therefore do him honor ...
In embroidered apparel she is brought to the king;
after her the bridesmaids follow in procession.
With joy and gladness they are brought,
and enter into the palace of the king."

(11,12,14,15)

Marguerite's scholastic orientation and her dilectical approach are apparent in her frequent use of opposites: commoners vs. nobility, actives vs. contemplatives, freedom vs. slavery, light vs. darkness, abyss vs. mountain, to name but a few. By explaining something by describing what it is not, she strains the dialectical approach to its limit, transforming it into the paradoxical language of the

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mystics, striving for meaning in the unknowable, finding light in the darkness and strength in weakness.

The evolution of the Soul proceeds downward into the abyss of nothingness where individual volition and desire are annihilated and thus simplified by becoming totally submissive to the Divine will. Annihilation occurs between the fourth and fifth stages where the soul relinquishes the hegemony of Reason and takes on Divine Love as her guide and teacher. Little by little, the Soul is divested of the exigencies of Nature, human counsel, good works, virtuous deeds, and religious practices such as masses, sermons and priests. By the fifth stage she is blind and guided by Divine Will alone. Swimming in the ocean of God's Love and Will, she is struck by a sudden flash of light which admits her but briefly into pure divine communion, but this sixth stage is only of short duration, and the Soul experiences only a brief consummation before returning to the fourth or fifth stages. The seventh stage is beyond human experience and Marguerite attributes her knowledge of this state to divine revelation. None save Mary, the mother of God, has come close to this stage in human experience. Jesus, being the incarnation of God, has his rightful habitation in Paradise, and he alone can bring knowledge of this seventh, most glorious state to human understanding.

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Multi-dimensionality of the Miroir

While the seven stages on the left of the chart suggest a linear progression or ascendancy, the numerous personifications and allegories used by Marguerite reflect what Luce Irigaray calls the "Multiplicity of female desire" (**The Sex** 30). In her own Mirror, the **Speculum of the Other Woman**, Irigaray ignores the ladder convention and sets out to investigate the psycho-sexual function of woman as object of the dominant male subject, who mirrors his desire and imitates the linearity of male discourse. She represents male discourse as goal-directed, teleological, and oriented toward form and visual objectification. She contends that the woman writer has traditionally conformed her discourse to the male paradigm, thus silencing and sacrificing her own multiple and non-polarized economy. The tension between the linear and multiple economies is apparent in Marguerite's **Miroir** as she appropriates the form of the spiritual ladder to perfection which provides a framework for her own more diffuse and imaginative discourse.

The multi-dimensionality of discourse which we find in the **Miroir** is common to other mystical writers as well. In his **Mystical Arc** (Ch. 5), Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) a century earlier describes how the discourse in the soul of a contemplative "at one time goes out and comes back with marvelous quickness, at another time bends itself, as it were into a circle, and yet at another time gathers itself

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together, as it were, in one place and fixes itself, as it were, motionless" (118). The contemplative Soul in Marguerite's **Miroir** conforms to this diverse experience. At times the Soul, feathered with Fine Love soars like an eagle, higher than all the other birds (Ch. 28), or flies on the wings of the Seraphim (Ch. 23). She may be burning in the furnace of Divine Love (Ch. 25) or swimming in the sea of God's Love, on the mountain or in the abyss, or motionless, abiding in the peace of the Godhead.

Luce Irigaray conceives of the woman as a mirror invested by the masculine subject to reflect himself (**The Sex** 30), and a woman is thus in the position of never discovering herself, of fragmenting her own desires. Yet unlike man, a woman, even though she remains several, "is kept from dispersion because the other is already within her and is autoerotically familiar to her" (31). The writings of Marguerite Porete clearly reflect a woman whose spiritual evolution has surpassed the teachings of the dominant subject, the male-dominated hierarchical church. Her emancipation from the oppressive male subject necessitates a renunciation of the traditional structures: of the "Smaller Church," of masses, priests, fasts, human affection, and of all religious practices which inhibit the inspiration of Divine Love within the Soul.

Marguerite conceives of her Beloved, the object of the Soul's desire, as Far-Near, who is at the same time so far

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and so close within her (Prologue). The Soul initially experiences his presence in the traditional lover-beloved relationship, as a far-off lover for whom a young damsel languishes. She writes:

> ... Je oy parler d'ung roy de grand puissance, qui estoit par courtoisie et par tres grant courtoisie de noblece et largesse ung noble Alixandre; mai si loing estoit de moy et moy de luy, que je ne savoie prandre confort de moy mesmes, et pour moy souvenir de lui il me donna ce livre qui represente en aucuns usages l'amour de lui mesmes.
>
> I heard tell of a great and powerful king, who, through courtliness and by very great courtly nobility and generosity, is like the noble Alexander. But he was so far from me and I from him that I could not be comforted, and as a token of my remembrance of him, he gave me this book which describes the practices of his love (Prologue).

While Far-Near assumes the dominant subject role in relation to the pliant feminine Soul, it is significant that Love, who personifies the Power of Far-Near, is feminine. The unity of the Godhead, the Trinity, also speaks in a feminine voice. The theme of Far-Near wooing the Soul

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through the power of Love is developed throughout the **Miroir** until the ecstatic moment of rapture finally occurs in a flashing blaze of light. The consummation takes place in the blinking of an eye and is characterized as an instantaneous opening and closing of a door.

Luce Irigaray also speaks of the extraordinary nature of this very nearness, defining it as the object of feminine desire. She writes:

> Nearness so pronounced that it makes all discrimination of identity, and thus all forms of property, impossible. Woman derives pleasure from what is so near that she cannot have it, nor have herself. She herself enters into a ceaseless exchange of herself with the other, without any possibility of identifying either. (**Speculum** 31)

The **Speculum** then, for Irigaray, involves more than a woman as an object of the dominant male subject. In her own mirror, the **Speculum of the Other Woman**, the mirror becomes the agency by which the feminine soul perceives the divine image within herself. Like Marguerite, Irigaray also explores the dark profundity of the soul and the numinous moment of rapture, of "Jouissance" in which the feminine soul unites with God. In the chapter entitled "La Mystérique," Irigaray's choice of metaphors is remarkably

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similar to those of the **Miroir**. Irigaray speaks of the dark abyss of nothingness of the soul which corresponds to the feminine orifice. She characterizes man as enclosed by a horizontal line of subjectivity which closes a circle of continuous repetition upon itself (192), while the soul, imprisoned within this wall of confinement, escapes only with a lightening flash, a "penetration of the divine touch" (195), which is the rapture and ecstasy of divine union. She writes:

> Each becomes the other in consumption, the nothing of the other in consummation. Each will not in fact have known the identity of the other, has thus lost self-identify except for a hint of an imprint that each keeps in order the better to intertwine in a union already, finally, at hand. (196)

In order to appropriate this desired nearness a woman "enters," again quoting Irigaray, "into a ceaseless exchange of herself with the other without any possibility of identifying either" (**The Sex** 31). How does this process manifest itself in the Soul's eschatological hope of divine union? Marguerite suggests in Chapter 137 of the **Miroir** that the Soul must be annihilated "back to her prior state where Love received her," ("in illud primum esse, ubi amor acceperat eam") and to accomplish this state she is forced

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to endure a test, "a probation examination, having won the wars which set her against her own powers" (Ch. 137) ("ipsa enim transiuit examen suae probationis et deuicit guerras omnium potentiarum"). These enigmatic words suggest a war within the self, a war of two natures, setting Love against Reason and Nature, a war in which Love conquers all in the end.

A reading of the **Miroir** through the critical eye of Irigaray invites a questioning of human existence and of ultimate feminine desire. Is this the exclusive property of the feminine sex? Does a woman enjoy a privileged role because she has more immediate access to the unconsciousness of the soul as Irigaray seems to suggest? How does the multiplicity of feminine desire inform our spirituality and our accessibility to the nearness of God? Are Reason and Nature our enemies or our friends on the path toward spiritual growth? What role does gender play in our psychological integration and spiritual wholeness?

These are questions for which there is perhaps no definitive answer; questions which come to mind in any society in which the male hierarchy controls the teaching and rituals which provide access to the spiritual nourishment the soul craves. Marguerite lived in such a society, and her use of symbols and encoded language enabled her readers to follow the process which she herself had to undergo. Renouncing the dominant patriarchial structures,

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she uses symbols which inspire her to touch genuine intuitions and aspirations and to define the feminine nature of God. Her prodigious use of symbols reflects a multiplicity of feminine desire which was misunderstood, suppressed, and almost silenced.

The Miroir and the Kabballa: A Case of Synchronicity?

It has already been noted that the **Miroir** was considered a dangerous text in its time, and that two clerics approved its content with the proviso that it should be read only by those who are well-advanced on the path to perfection. Indeed, it is a common theme throughout the text that it should be read with care, and that there is a hidden meaning in the **glose**. In her song to the Holy Trinity in Chapter 121 Marguerite writes:

Ma seur et la moye amye,
Par amour, se vous voulez,
Que vous ne vueillez plus dire les secrez,
Que vous savez:
Les aultres s'en dampneroient,
La ou vous vous sauverez,
Puisque Raison et Desir les gouvernent,
Et Crainte et Voulenté.

My sister and my beloved

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For Love's sake, if you please,
Tell nothing of the secrets,
Which are known to you alone?
For others it means damnation,
While for you it is salvation,
Since Reason and Desire govern
Them with Fear and strong Volition.

The theme of a secret doctrine is common to many mystical texts, of which the foremost is the Kabballa which is contemporaneous to the **Miroir**. The Kabballa is a large collection of Jewish mystical writings which shares many basic themes with the **Miroir**. It is a text which contains a secret doctrine because it treats the most deeply hidden and fundamental matters of human life, and it is secret also because the text was confined to an élite of the chosen who would pass on the secret knowledge to their disciples (Scholem 21). It is not my intention to do an exhaustive comparative analysis of the Kabballa and the **Miroir**, but rather, it is of interest, in the context of medieval spirituality, to point out the similarities that exist between them, even though there is no evidence that Marguerite had any exposure to Jewish mystical thought.

Although the Kabballists eschew the genre of mystical autobiography, they aim at describing the realm of Divinity and other objects of their contemplation (Scholem 16). Like

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the **Miroir**, language is considered a precious, yet inadequate instrument, and human reason is considered insufficient to comprehend the mysteries of God:

> Only very gradually did the Kabbalists, rather than the philosophers, begin to perceive the implications of their own ideas, the conflict between a purely philosophical interpretation of the world, and an attitude which progresses from rational thought to irrational meditation, and from there to the mystical interpretation of the universe. (24)

The universe of the Kabballa is perceived in the form of a sphere, "the world of the **Sefiroth**" (11) which is further divided into a series of seven stages or heavens through which the soul must pass. Each passage is fraught with danger and with magical elements: doorkeepers, special seals, pillars of flame around a fiery throne and secret names (49). Like the **Miroir**, the Kabballa speaks of a "nothing" which is at the heart of creation.

> In truth, however, this Nothing is infinitely more real than all other reality. Only when the soul has stripped itself of all limitation, and in mystical language, has descended into the depths of Nothing does it encounter the Divine. For the **Nothing**

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> comprises a wealth of mystical reality although it cannot be defined. "Un Dieu défini serait un Dieu fini." In a word, it signifies the Divine itself, its most impenetrable guise. And, in fact, **creation out of nothing** means to many mystics just **creation out of God.** (25-6)

In the section on the Spiritual Ladder to Perfection we have already discussed the paradoxical nature of the descent of the Soul into the state of nothingness, which in the **Miroir** is divested of all will, desire and affection. The Soul must be stripped naked of all affectations and incumbrances which might get in the way of pure Divine Will. The **Kabballa**, in its expression of the **via negativa**, demonstrates that this topos, derived from Christian neo-platonic thought, could be effective in a non-Christian tradition. But to be effective, the expression of the **via negativa** relies on the signs and symbols of allegory, which carry both extrinsic and intrinsic meanings, and when the secret, intrinsic meaning is revealed, it is multiple in nature, often carrying an infinity of meaning, some of which is paradoxical in nature. In the **Miroir**, the **Kabballa**, and indeed most mystical literature, symbols make something transparent which is beyond all expression, uncovering multiple layers of meaning which can only be understood in entirety through intuition or not at all. The **Miroir**

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surpasses the **Kabballa** in its development of the feminine aspect of God which Marguerite probably derived from both the Cistercians and the Flemish mystics. Yet the **Kabballa**, in the conception of the Shekhinah, includes the paradoxical idea of a feminine element in God, while at the same time equating the demonic as an offspring of the feminine sphere (37). The **Kabballa** is clearly a product of the patristic tradition, yet strangely departs from that tradition as it explores dimensions beyond the realm of rational thought. The coincidence of these two texts appearing at the same time, from two different traditions yet bearing so many similarities, is a phenomenon that invites further discussion and merits additional scholarship.

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The Seven States of Divine Love's Perfection

State	Characteristics	Personification	Allegories
Sin	Life of the flesh	Corruption	Adam's sin; the Red Sea
	Baptism		
1 Grace	Death to mortal sin Follow the will,Nature Keeps Commandments,Law Human counsel	Merchants, Commoners	"asses", "beasts"
2 Virtue's Works	Practice of Good Works Death to Nature's wiles Life of the Gospel Follower of Jesus, Ignores angels' counsel Unawareness of state	The "actives" The "perished" Rachel	Martha the chaff
3 Inner Works	War of two Natures: Will vs. Spirit Practice works of Perfection Awareness of own evil Awareness of state	The "errant" Slaves & Merchants Magdelaine silent	Foreign land In the shadow
4 Contem-plation	Perfection of Spirit Meditation, some will Loss of innocence Aware of abyss	The "beggar" The "imprisioned"	Outside King's Court Magdelaine silent The "Small" Church
	Annihilation		
5 Blind Love's Humility	Mortified spirit Blindness, abyss, Love, Praise, Wisdom Knows all and nothing Wills all and nothing Feels, desires nothing Swimming in God's Love	Forgetfulness The "annihilated" The Freed Souls The Simplified Souls	Vessel of God's goodness The Elect Life w/o intermediary Benjamin, the seed Divine Sun
6 Clarity	Lightning Opening Clarified Life Divine Knowledge Annihilated Life illuminated	Pure Divine Love Perfect Charity In Communion Peace without remorse	Far-near's opening In the secret cloister The Greater Church Most innocent daughter of Jerusalem The Mountain
	Separation of Soul and Body (Mary)		
7 Glory	Sees the Trinity Divine Fruition	The Glorified Ones Jesus	Glorified Life Paradise

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The Synthesis of Courtly, Chivalric, and Spiritual Conventions

It has already been noted that the close economic and social ties of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Flanders, Rhineland and Northern France brought about a corresponding intellectual and spiritual renaissance. The crusades had opened the eyes of the west to the wealth of Constantinople, and many knights brought back to Western Europe a taste for a more refined lifestyle as well as a wealth of Classical literature which had been unknown in the west, including the myths and legends of the East, and the mystical heritage of the Desert Fathers (Keen 109). The **Miroir**, although primarily a devotional text, represents a fusion of the courtly, chivalric, and spiritual conventions. In the pages that follow, I will discuss three of the themes which unite these conventions: First, the legend of Alexander which combines both chivalric and courtly themes in a spiritual context; second, the use of genealogy and lineage to confer human and divine nobility; and third, Marguerite's understanding of the terms **franchise** (freedom) and **marriz** (errant, wayward, blemished) in their social and religious contexts in the **Miroir.**

Marguerite begins the **Miroir** with the legend of King Alexander. Alexander was a pagan, yet he finds himself in a Christian text because his story had become known in

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France by virtue of the thirteenth-century **Roman d'Alexandre**, written by Alexander of Bernay. This work had a profound influence on medieval courtly literature, and its origin goes back to Pseudo-Callisthenes, a second century Greek writer (Zum Brunn 153). King Alexander is an embodiment of the chivalric values of **courtoisie**, **largesse** (generosity), **prouesse**, **loyauté**, and **franchise** (the free and frank bearing that denotes nobility and virtue). The essence of these values is described by Longchamp in his introduction to the modern French translation of the **Miroir**:

> Si la courtoisie caractérise encore un art de vivre fait de politesse et de générosité chevaleresque (celle-là même prêtée à Alexandre le Grand), elle indique alors surtout une volonté de poursuivre jusqu'au bout théoriquement et pratiquement, la plénitude de l'expérience amoureuse. Le **Fin Amour** est de ce fait l'objet propre de la recherche courtoise, et le **Miroir** qualifie régulièrement l'âme simple et anéantie comme celle qui "**Fine Amour demande**". Dans la première littérature courtoise, celle des troubadours de langue d'oc, Fin Amour est fruit de la fidélité intrépide de l'amant dans toutes les épreuves imposées par sa dame (fruit de la "**jouvens**"), et sa caractéristique

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> propre est la Joie, enthousiasme et conquérant en même temps que sentiment lié à la possession complète de l'objet aimé. Dans la courtoisie du Nord dont hérite le **Miroir**, ces notions se spiritualisent et s'intériorisent, mais sans rien perdre de leur force. (24)

Marguerite borrows from this legend and places it in a religious context. Alexander seems like a medieval knight. The damsel falls in love with him from his renown, not from a close encounter. The troubadour theme of distant love inspires the damsel to have an image made of Alexander, her far-off lover, to help her dream of him while she pursues her customary practices, which we understand to be religious and devotional in nature. This legend produces the following response from the Soul:

> Semblablement vrayement, au tel vous dis je: je oy parler d'ung roy de grant puissance, qui estoit par courtoisie et par tres grant courtoisie de noblece et largesse un noble Alixandre; mais si loing estoit de moy et moy de luy, que je ne savoie prandre confort de voy mesmes, et pour moy souvenir de lui il me donna ce livre qui represent en aucuns usages l'amour de lui mesmes. Mais non obstant que

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j'aye son ymage, n'est il pas que je ne soie en estrange pais et loing du palais ouquel les tres nobles amis de ce seigneur demourent, qui sont tous purs, affinés et franchix par les dons de ce roy, avec lequel ils demourent. (Prologue)

It would truly seem that I am quite the same: I heard tell of a great and powerful king, who, by his courtesy and generosity, and by his courtly nobility is like the noble Alexander. But he was so far from me and I from him that I could not be comforted, and as a token of my remembrance of him, he gave me this book which describes the practice of his love. But it is only an image that I have, for am I not in a strange country and far away from the palace where the fine and noble friends of this Lord dwell, who are completely pure, refined and freed by the gifts of the King with whom they dwell?

What begins as a story is transformed into an allegory. The Soul compares the damsel's love for Alexander the King to her pining for God, her far-away lover, who is described in terms of a great lord possessing all the courtly and chivalric virtues. In Chapter 59 she will give this Lord a name: Far-Near, who

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alone has the key to opening (**ouverture**) the door to divine illumination. The opening recalls the biblical passage from Isaiah 22:22, "When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open," and the apocalyptic vision of St. John:

> He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: "I know your deeds. Behold I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name." (Rev. 3:7-8)

Complimentary to Marguerite's use of the term **ouverture**, the term **aperture** or **apertement** was frequently used anagogically in medieval texts to describe things that will be revealed, as in the case of a vision, and the **Miroir** clearly has this intent. From the beginning it is stated that the book which is written for her is divinely inspired, to become a handbook for others who are similarly searching. The text itself explains why it is like a mirror, a relfection from God to lead the soul into Truth and a life of perfection.

Thus the **Miroir** shows the extent to which the ethos of chivalry passed from a feudal milieu into an amatory

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ethos which then becomes a dominant motif for a religious text. Earlier texts such as **Chanson de Roland** or the **De Laude** of Bernard of Clairvaux work to imprint the warrior-knight with Christian virtues. On the other hand, the **Miroir** attributes chivalric virtues to God, and we see God as the great Seigneur or Lord, and the Soul as an errant knight indebted to his/her Lord for everything, thoroughly dependent upon his grace. Marguerite transfers feudal allegiance to a mystical and anagogical plane, subtly luring a compliant reader/hearer to share her divine encounter.

Marguerite makes frequent use of heraldic motifs to confer divine nobility upon the human soul through the use of genealogy and lineage. In Chapters 52 and 53 she describes the coat of arms of a humble soul as having four quarters in a field (**plane**) of truth adorned with a precious pearl (**marguerite** in Middle French), which not only suggests her own moral nobility but provides the hearer with a thinly disguised signature to the text. The plain of truth suggests a platonic significance of a pasturage suited to the highest part of the soul (Ch. 9, note 3) forming the field of the crest. The four quarters of a nobleman's crest represented both his lineage and his wife's. All four ancestors had to be noble in order for the bearer to be noble. In the **Miroir**, however, nobility is conferred upon the Soul not

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through parental lineage but through the Fatherhood of God:

> (Amour) Ceste Ame, qui telle est parfaictement, est franche de ses quatre costez. Car quatre costez convient il estre en noble homme, ains qu'il puisse estre gentilz homs appellé, et ainsi est il a l'entendement espirituel ... Et se elle est ainsi franche de tous costez, elle pert son nom, car elle monte en souveraineté. Et pource pert elle son moy en celluy, en quoy elle est de luy en luy fondue et remise de luy en luy pour elle mesmes. Ainsi comme feroit une eaue qui vient de la mar, qui a aucon nom, comme l'en pourroit dire Aise, ou Sene, ou une aultre riviere; et quant celle eaue ou riviere rentre en mer, elle pert son cours et le nom d'elle, dont elle couroit en plusieurs pays en faisant son oeuvre. Or est elle en mer, la ou elle se repouse, et ainsi a perdu tel labour. Pareillement est il de ceste Ame. (Ch. 82)

> (Love): This Soul of perfect nobility is free in all four quarters, for a nobleman should have four quarters to be called a gentleman and to have spiritual understanding ... Thus she is free in

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> all respects: her name is lost and she is elevated in sovereignty. Her name is lost in the one in whom she has her being, melted in him and hidden in him for her own sake. She is like water which comes from the sea and becomes a river with a name like Seine or Oise. When the stream flows back to the sea, it loses its current and the name it had when it flowed in many lands, doing its work. Now it is the sea, resting, and it toils no more. It is the same with this Soul. (Ch. 82)

The Soul, in Marguerite's understanding, must pass through the essential phase of errancy to become free. She contrasts the **marriz** with those who have **franchise** or freedom. The word **marriz** has a corresponding meaning in English, "marred", and Marguerite uses this term to connote a person who is errant, wayward or blemished. The "marred" life is hindered in its early development by its selfish pursuit of the virtues, and although there is a danger that it may remain in this state, it is possible that it may rise to a higher state of perfection. She equates the **marriz** with merchants and slaves, but there is hope for them, for at least they are aware of being on the wrong track. Errancy also connotes detachment, such as a wandering knight who must prove himself in order to

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become worthy of his feudal lord. She says of the errant ones:

> Pour ce qu'ilz tiennent qu'il est ung estre meilleur que n'est leur estre, et si cognoissent bien qu'ilz n'ont pas cognoissance de ce meilleur que ilz croient ... ilz se tiennent pour meschans et pour marriz. Et aussi sont ilz, sans faille, envers le franc estre de ceulx qui y sont.
> (Ch. 57)

> Ceste Ame a son lot de franchise affinee, checun costé en a sa plaine pinte. Elle ne respont a nully, ne veult, se il n'est de son lignage; car un gentilhomme ne daigneroit respondre a ung vilain, se il l'appelloit ou requeroit de champ de bataille; et pource ne trouve l'appelloit ou requeroit de champ de bataille; et pource ne trouve telle Ame qui l'appelle: ses ennemis n'ont plus d'ell response. (Ch. 85)

> They aspire to a state which is better than their own, and they are well aware of not knowing this better state which they believe in ... they consider themselves miserable and displaced, and so

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> they are in comparison to the liberated state of the others. (Ch. 57)
>
> This Soul has perfected her heritage of freedom: each quarter has its field adorned. She answers to no one who is not of her lineage if she doesn't care to, for a nobleman would not deign speak to a commoner if he beckoned or challenged him to the field of battle. So this Soul ignores those who call her. Her enemies get no response from her. (Ch. 85)

The juxtaposition of free and enslaved, free and in error is a consistent motif throughout the text. "Errant/erring" also recalls the wandering knight, the third-born son who had neither inheritance nor priestly office waiting for him, and who was thus on his own to make his fortune. Marguerite gives the term **marriz** a spiritual connotation. The "errant/erring" Soul knows she is not complete and therefore cannot be lost since she seeks a higher state and is still longing for her Beloved who is far away. The freed Soul, by contrast, is answerable to no one, because her inner being, her will, her desires are all conformed to God. Once in God's will she is incapable of sinning against him. Porete compares this state to that of the nobleman who is answerable to

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no one but himself. Like the angels, this Soul does the perfect will of God and has no will of her own (see Ch. 72)

Marguerite Porete has been associated with the Free Spirit Movement which may be considered a forerunner of modern Protestantism. She saw the corruption of the Church and even went so far as to say that the sacraments were not necessary to the salvation of the soul. What is most important is the inner life and the complete conversion of the individual into an instrument of the perfect will of God. Intermediaries were not necessary. It is not surprising that the Church establishment did not take kindly to her theology! She was convinced that the established Church was governed more by Reason and less by the Holy Spirit. Her conception of the Greater and Little Holy Churches reflects the reality that the Church was not capable of sustaining the spiritual appetites of some practitioners, or of hearing the prophetic voice of its adherents.

The Prophetic Voice

Marguerite's prophetic vision is most clearly found in her characterization of God as her Beloved and in the rapturous union which takes place between the Soul and Far-Near. Visions of the sort Marguerite experienced were common to both men and women, but while men's

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ecstatic experiences were centered more on the Virgin Mary, women's visions centered around union with the Bridegroom and with the mystical body of Christ in the Eucharist. Caroline Walker Bynum, in her study of the lives of saints entitled **Religious Women in the Later Middle Ages**, identifies three main elements in medieval women's religious experience which can be conceived as characteristically female. The first concerns institutional structures, the organizational side of religious life which women consider less important than men. Secondly, the life continuum of women seems to be marked with fewer sudden and dramatic conversions and reversals than men. The women tended to grow gradually from early childhood or adolescence, while the male saints, by contrast, experience abrupt conversions during adolescence, involving renunciation of wealth, power, marriage and sexuality (Bynum 131).

Bynum suggests that men are able to determine the shape of their lives, while women tended to use their ordinary experiences of powerlessness, service, sexuality, disease and nurturing as "symbols into which they poured ever deeper and more paradoxical meanings" (131). A third difference is the female inclination toward mysticism and para-mystical phenomena, such as trances, stigmata, or levitation. A woman's reputation for holiness was often "based on supernatural charismatic

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authority, especially visions and supernatural signs" (Bynum 131), and the practice of extreme asceticism was considered a mark of sanctity.

Women's visions also followed recurrent themes such as devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus or to the Eucharist, visions of cradling or nursing the infant Christ, mystical union with the Bridegroom, and experiencing the agony of the cross. Bynum suggests that the charismatic gifts of prophesy and visions in the writings of women gave them a voice which was denied them in the priestly functions of presiding over the Eucharist or proclaiming the Gospel. These visions inspired confidence in the recipient and others, tapped springs of creativity, and provided insights for teaching and for inner transformation.

The Soul in the **Miroir** speaks the inner voice of the self, not of the individual ego as we have come to know it in the twentieth century. Development of self meant development toward God in the thirteenth century (Bynum, **Jesus as Mother** 87). The **Miroir's** inner landscape of the individual Soul is thus the pasture or field for the operation of God's grace. It is a dynamic **locus**, and even in the midst of a fixed hierarchical and patriarchal society Marguerite saw the potential for spiritual mobility:

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... se ung homme sert a ung maistre, il est a celluy a qui il sert, mais son maistre n'est mie a luy; et aucunes foiz advient que ce serviteur gaigne tant avec son maistre et aprent que il est plus riche et plus sage que son maistre, par quoy ce serviteur lesse son maistre pour en avoir ung meilleur que luy, et quant celluy qui fut maistre de cestuy voit de certain que son valet, qui fut, vault mieulx et qu'il scet plus que luy, il se demeure avec luy, pour obeir du tout a luy. Tout aussi pouvez vous et devez entendre des Vertuz et de telles Ames. Car au commancement cest Ame fist, quequ'il luy coustast de cueur et de corps, tout ceu que Raison lui enseignoit, qui estoit maistresse de ceste Ame; laquelle Raison luy disoit tousjours qu'elle fist tout ce que les Vertuz vouloient, sans contredit jusques a la mort ... Or est il ainsi que ceste Ame a tant gaigné et aprins avec les Vertuz, que elle est dessus les Vertuz, car elle a en elle tout ce que les Vertuz scevent apprendre, et encore sans comparaison. Car cest Ame a en elle la maistress des Vertuz, que l'en nomme Divine Amour. (Ch. 21)

If a man serves a master, he belongs to the one he serves, but his master does not belong to him.

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> This servant, gaining much with his master, learns that he is richer and wiser than his master. Then this servant leaves this master to find a better one. When the first master sees for certain that his valet is worth more than he, he stays with him, obeying him in everything. In the same way you can and must consider the Virtues and such Souls. For at the beginning this Soul, whatever the cost to body and soul, did whatever Reason, her mistress, taught her. Reason would always tell her to do what the Virtues wanted, without objection, unto death ... But this Soul has surpassed the Virtues in all knowledge, and more so, without comparison. For this Soul has within her the master of the Virtues, whom they call Divine Love. (Ch. 21)

What the Soul calls "taking leave of the Virtues" (Ch. 6) actually means that she need no longer consciously will herself to lead a virtuous life. When the Soul receives the indwelling love and grace of God, the virtuous life becomes automatic and unconscious since the love of God contains all the virtues. By the same token, her parable of the servant and his master reflects Marguerite's relation to the Church. She believed she had surpassed the Church in her spiritual understanding, and the Church could now learn from people like her who

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comprised the Greater Holy Church. It would thus appear, following Marguerite's logic, that as a servant has the mobility to better his master, so the Soul can ascend the spiritual ladder, free from worldly encumbrances, even free of the Church establishment.

In order to emphasize the prevenient grace of God's love working in the Soul, Marguerite contrasts the Soul abiding in Love with Love abiding in the Soul. The first instance means that the individual practices the virtues and is enslaved by their work. One cannot achieve salvation through good works alone. God's Love, dwelling within the Soul, accomplishes works of Love effortlessly and unconsciously. Serving the Virtues is akin to what St. Paul called living according to the Law. When one abides in Love one is still enslaved; when Love abides in the soul one is free, knowing that everything that one does, even attending to natural demands, is consistent with God's will. The Virtues then pass from dominant master to obedient slave, for all the Virtues must be subordinate to God. This theme is also common to William of St. Thierry, who described the perfected life as "embracing within itself and containing all the virtues, and they are not borrowed from another source but as it were, implanted in [the perfected life] so that it resembles God" (**Golden Epistle** 1. 276).

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As the Soul accomplishes a spiritual evolution in the **Miroir** so the expository style of the writing correspondingly changes. Marguerite begins with a Boethian dialogue form and gradually adopts a more meditative and expository style, which breaks forth into a lyrical expression from just beneath the surface, as a melody which haunts you, imploring to be sung. Comparing the **Miroir** with the **Fliessendes Licht** of Mechtild, Peter Dronke has written:

> The lyrical and the quasi-dramatic passages are integral to the construction. In her extended complex dialogues Marguerite never dispenses with narrative transition--in this she is closer, for instance, to Ramon Lull than to Mechtild. Yet as in Mechtild's **Fliessendes Licht**, spontaneous dramatic tension can arise in the interchanges and conflicts between Marguerite's projections of inner and celestial forces, and among these forces (again as in Mechtild) Lady Love takes the lead. A further likeness lies in what we might call the lyrical continuum, which, in the **Mirror** and in the **Fliessendes Licht**, extends from rhythmic prose, filled with parallelism and homoioteleuta, to more sustained rhymed passages, to fully poetic forms. (218)

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The "lyrical continuum" accelerates toward the end as the book divests itself of most of the prominent speakers. The Soul first takes leave of the Virtues, and then of Reason, who becomes overcome by Love, both of which represent the Soul's earlier intellectual turmoil and spiritual uncertainties. Gradually the dialogue is replaced by a calmer, more assured lyrical and autobiographical exposition. Once the Soul decides for Love she has entered into Love's domain and no longer exercises her will to make conscious choices (Ch. 41). It is significant that God and Far-Near are the only male voices in the **Miroir**. Reason, the Soul, and Love, the major speakers in the debate, are all feminine. As Love gradually becomes identified with God, she nevertheless retains her feminine assignation and this might be considered as God's Anima from a Jungian perspective. In this created state the Soul is free to act unconsciously for she is in touch with the essence of the God within her. This transformation resembles Jung's conception of an encounter of the Anima with the Shadow-self, the sins and evil inherent in each individual, which is followed by the integration of the disparate parts of the personality to form the integrated whole or self. Ann Astell writes of how Bernard of Clairvaux evoked the Anima of the Cistercian monks "in the form of the Hetaira Bride" to help them come to self-knowledge. As any

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auditor can identify with the bride of the **Song of Songs**, so the Soul in Marguerite's **Miroir** is equally accessible, allowing "every auditor to discover his personal myth and retell his own life story as a romance of rescue and ravishment, heroic labors and longing, seeking and finding" (Astell 77). The **Miroir**, as a vaguely-disguised autobiography, with its dominant feminine subjectivity and its psycho-spiritual conflicts, is a text which invites further psychological, phenomenological, or gender studies.

The **Miroir** is a reflection of a powerful spiritual reality as experienced by Marguerite herself. She testifies to being touched and taught, caressed and ravished by her Divine Lover, and the language of chivalry and **fin'amors** was the best vehicle of expression available to her in her time. She is a contemporary of Dante, Eckhart, Mechtild, Marguerite of Oignt, Gertrude the Great, Humiliata, as well as the writers of the **Kabbalia**. Juliana of Norwich, St. Theresa of Avila, and St. John of the Cross would continue the mystical tradition after Marguerite was so violently silenced. Despite the condemnation of her text, it was nevertheless widely disseminated in Europe, and even Queen Marguerite de Navarre, the sister of King François I of France, writes of how she cherished the **Miroir**.

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O qu'elle estoit, ceste femme, ententive
A recevoir cest Amour qui brulloit
Son cueur et ceulx ausquelz elle parloit!
Bien congnoissoit, par cest Esprit subtil,
Le vray Amy qu'ell nommoit Gentil
Et son Loing Près. O que c'est bien nommé
Celluy qui doit par sus tous estre aymé.
(**Prisons** III 1324-29)

How wise was that woman
Who received that love that burned
Her heart and those to whom she wrote!
Her perceptive mind understood well
The true Love she called Gentle
and her Far-Near. A name well-given
To one who should be loved by all!

While she was branded by her own century as a heretic and witch, there were others who continued the mystical tradition and considered her a saint. Marguerite is a humble and unassuming writer, and she writes her mirror to provide an example for others to follow, for she is convinced that mystical union is possible in this life. It is ironic that she should use the motif of burning to express her experience of being consumed by Divine Love.

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> Yet this Soul has been burning so long in the furnace of Love's fire that she has virtually become fire, so she doesn't feel the fire, because she herself is fire by virtue of Love, who has transformed her into Love's fire. (Ch. 25)

Fire has classically been used to symbolize the mystical purification of the soul and its consummation with God. On another level this vision prophetically reveals the fire which consumed both her body and her book at the stake. Yet, mysteriously at times, the phoenix does rise from its ashes, and the writings of Marguerite Porete, thanks to the discovery of Romana Guarnieri, can now experience their long-deserved twentieth-century resurrection.

The Influence of the Miroir on Marguerite de Navarre

It has already been noted that the **Miroir**, although not widely circulated in its own time, did eventually end up in the hands of Marguerite de Navarre, the sister of King François I, and the celebrated author of the **Heptameron**. But Queen Marguerite's literary contribution in the domain of poetry is more vast and equally significant to her better-known collection of stories. Among many other works, she is known for her **Cent Ballades**, a collection of one hundred love poems, and for

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the **Prisons**, a three-volume allegorical poem which traces the evolution of Love in a gentleman. The **Prisons** will be our primary focus in this analysis of the **Miroir's** influence, since Queen Marguerite specifically singles it out as one of the most divinely inspired works in her knowledge. She compares the **Miroir** to the theological works by other **"bons docteurs"** who have vainly tried to write of the soul which God made in his own image:

> L'ame que Dieu a faicte à son ymage--
> Ces bons docteurs où l'on se doit mirer
> Assez ne puys louer ny admirer:
> Ny n'ay sçavoir pour leur esprit comprendre,
> Ny de leurs faictz digne louange rendre.
> Mais seulement de celle m'esverveille
> Dont je n'ay veu escripture pareille,
> Et qui n'a eu pour maistre et precepteur
> Que Amour tout seul et soymesme inventeur.
> (**Prisons** III, 1414-21)

> The soul which God made in his image--
> Those good doctors in whom one should mirror oneself--
> I can neither so praise nor admire,
> Their minds are beyond my comprehension
> Their works are unworthy of my praise,
> But only she fills me with wonder

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Of whose writing I've seen no equal,
Whose only master and teacher
Was Love, who alone was her inventor.
(My translation)

There is little doubt that the **Miroir** profoundly influenced Queen Marguerite de Navarre's thought, and her mystical language, so characteristic of the third book of the **Prisons**, was directly inspired by her own meditation on Marguerite Porete's **Miroir**. But before exploring more fully the **Miroir**'s influence on the **Prisons**, it is important to discover just how Queen Marguerite may have obtained a copy of the **Miroir**. For many years, Queen Marguerite's oblique reference to **Gentil Loing-Près** had been variously attributed to Catherine of Sienna and to the mystical poetry of Hadewijch, until the discovery of the Chantilly Manuscript, where the concept of Far-Near is far more extensively developed than in any other work.

In her **"Il movimento del libero spirito,"** Romana Guarnieri traces the Chantilly manuscript to the convent of Madelaine-lés-Orléans, a monastery which was part of the Fontevrault Reform and with which Queen Marguerite had a close association. Guarnieri documents a gift in April of 1530 to the Madeleine sisters by King François I at the behest of his sister, Marguerite de Navarre. The substance of that gift is not known, but it may have

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conceivably included the Chantilly manuscript of the **Miroir**. In her introduction to the 1978 edition of the **Prisons**, Simone Glasson attributes the **"Loing-Près"** reference directly to Marguerite Porete's **Miroir** and gives additional evidence of the **Loing-Près** antithesis by Guillaume Briconnet, the Bishop of Meaux, in his correspondence with Queen Marguerite (49).

The **Prisons** is a vast allegorical confession which traces the individual's spiritual quest through a series of three symbolic prisons; each of which corresponds to a psychological, intellectual, or spiritual stage in a gentleman's spiritual development. The first book of the **Prisons** builds upon the traditional courtly metaphor, reminiscent of the **Roman de la rose**, of the prison of Love where the lover experiences such felicity in Love that he scarcely realizes he has lost his freedom. The prison metaphor is also used in the Pauline sense employed in the **Miroir**--that of the soul as a prisoner of the body, driven by carnal desire which is at war with the Spirit. In the first book the hero is trapped in the Tower of Love by **Ami**, or Friend. He escapes from the first prison and in Book II he cedes to the solicitations of Avarice, Ambition, and of Concupiscence and is put back on track by **un vieillard**, or old man, who is a disciple of virtuous moderation. Turning away from the temptations of the flesh, the prisoner in the third book

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constructs his own intellectual prison which is composed of nine successive pillars of books. This temple of knowledge represents nine academic disciplines which are representative of human knowledge. The prisoner carefully constructs each of the pillars, admires and cherishes human knowledge, only to allow the whole edifice to tumble down when the idolatrous nature of human knowledge is revealed to him:

> Je desiroys le plaisant fruict manger
> De tout sçavoir, sans craindre le danger,
> Pour parvenir à cestuy là de vie
> Où l'ame en Dieu sans mourir est ravie.
> (**Prisons** III 385-8)

> I wanted to eat the pleasant fruit
> Of all knowledge, without fearing the danger,
> To end up in that life
> Where the soul is ravished in God, without dying.

The turning point in the third book of the **Prisons** is a direct result of the narrator's contemplation of the paradoxical **Gentil Loing-Près**, who represents a fusion of the finite and the infinite. One by one she contemplates the meaning of each word, the significance of the three parts before synthesizing them.

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She writes:

Le ciel est loing d'enfer, divinité
Loing de la chair de nostre humanité,
Le bien du mal, et la vertu du vice.
Mais vraye Amour, usant de son office,
Ce Dieu tant loing qu'il ne se laissoit veoir
A rendu près de nou; par son povoir
Ce Loing est Près, et le ciel à la terre
Amour fait joindre, mettant fin à la guerre
D'entre le Loing et Près, par tel accord
Que le Tresloing, vaincu par un moret
[Est] près de nous,--mais je vous dy si près--
Que je ne puys trouver termes exprès
Pour declairer comme est près ce Tresloing.
(III 1353-65)

Heaven is far from Hell, divinity
Far from our human flesh,
Good from evil, virtue from vice.
But true Love, using his office,
This God so far that he is not seen
Has brought near to us; through his power
This Far is Near, and Love has joined
Heaven and Earth, ending the war
between Far and Near, by such accord

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That the Very Far, conquered by a death
Is near to us,--but I say so near
That I cannot find the right words
To express how near is this Very Far.
(my translation)

The narrator is so amazed by the insight of the woman who wrote of Far-Near that she singles it out as one of the most spiritual books ever written. The narrator considers the Bible as the greatest book ever written, the foundation of all knowledge, because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit (1426-29). She proceeds to experience her own moment of rapture, characterized by a blast of light and fire, setting her free from her slavery to learning (1533-44). In describing her moment of insight Queen Marguerite confirms her debt to Marguerite Porete by using the terminology of the **Miroir**. She speaks of slavery vs. freedom, of drinking in new knowledge, of experiencing nothingness, of being annihilated, of divine forgetfulness, of the fire of Divine Love, of being ravished by Love, resulting in a transformational moment of divine insight:

"Où est l'Esprit, là est la liberté."
Et me donna ce mot la seureté
Que ayant receu cest Esprit veritable

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Plus ne seroys prisonier miserable;
Car cest Esprit, qui tout m'aneantit,
Et mon Cuyder et desir amortit,
Me sçait et peult en un Rien transformer.
Et ce Rien là ne se peult enfermer,
Car Rien ne crainct prison, ne porte close;
Ilz n'ont povoir, sinon sur quelque chose;
Mais où Cuyder d'estre est entretenu,
Tant soit petit, peult estre retenu.
Et quand ce Riens à son Tout est uny
Et le Cuyder en lui mort et puny,
C'est liberté plaisante, pure et plaine,
Contantement et joye souveraine. (1745-60)

"Where the Spirit is, is freedom also."
And I was given this word by the surety
That having received the true Spirit
I will be no longer a wretched prisoner;
For this Spirit who annihilated me
And slayed my Belief and my desire,
Knows me and can transform me into Nothing.
And that Nothing cannot be jailed,
For Nothing fears neither prison nor closed doors:
They have no power, save in one respect;
For where Belief in self is kept,
However small it be, it still remains.

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And when Nothing to All is joined
And Belief in self is dead and punished,
It is blissful freedom, pure and simple,
Contentment and sovereign joy.

Queen Marguerite meditates at great length on the **Tout/Rien** dichotomy, again signaling her debt to Marguerite Porete as she recycles the latter's symbols and images. The **Rien** which the narrator has become achieves allegorical status. **Rien** is blinded by a flash of Divine Light (1899), freed from encumbrances by this light without darkness (1919-20), becomes "petit grand" melted in the All (1930), winning All and losing Nothing (1932), flying high like an eagle in the All (1943), erring, burning and mirroring itself in the All (1960, 1980, 1990).

Book Three of the **Prisons** finds our narrator, who started out as a prisoner in the tower of Love, reduced to nothing. The evolution of the prisoner has reached an end once he has been transformed by the Holy Spirit. If he has achieved ultimate liberty he can no longer be a prisoner. As in the **Miroir** where the allegory is maintained through the discourse of the various personages and ends when the Soul is reduced to nothingness, so the prison allegory loses its structure once the prisoner is set free by becoming nothing. There

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can be no more debate, no more discourse, once the narrator is consumed by the All of the Divine. In this respect both Marguerites establish a narrative structure which is destined to dissolve and disintegrate, and both the **Miroir** and the **Prisons** suffer from a lack of structural and thematic integrity.

Yet both Marguerites seem to have the energy and desire to continue writing after their allegories have dissolved. Marguerite Porete ends her **Miroir** with a series of examples of saintly persons, John the Baptist, Mary Magdelene, and Mary, Mother of Jesus, all of whom chose to be Nothing to God's All. It is significant that Marguerite de Navarre chooses to terminate her **Prisons** with a series of sketches of contemporary heroes including the Duc d'Alençon and her brother, François I. These biographical tributes resemble a series of funeral orations in rhyming couplets, and they contain little of the wit and starch of the **Heptameron** stories. The effect of these addenda is that of anticlimax, especially in the case of the **Prisons**, where the stories bear scant resemblance to the thematic whole. The obvious connection of these stories to the prison theme is that each of the heroes suffered imprisonment and died a repentant death. It is assumed they were included to provide real examples of the evolutionary process which the allegory is trying to teach. But it is debatable

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whether these eulogized heroes ever attained the level of spiritual perfection experienced by the narrator in the third book of the **Prisons.**

The saintly examples provided by Marguerite Porete in the final chapters of the **Miroir** serve a corresponding function: They exemplify a soul who has become simplified and annihilated in the divine will, and as such, they become mirrors of divine love. As well-known saints of the Bible, they have already achieved a mythological proportion, and their inclusion does far less damage to the unity of the text. Few would question the sanctity of Marguerite Porete's examples, nor could it be concluded that the Soul in the **Miroir** reached a higher level of spiritual perfection than the blessed saints.

It is apparent that Queen Marguerite profited greatly from her contemplative reading of the **Miroir**, and that it served as a point of departure for her **Prisons.** The germ for the prison allegory could have come from any of a number of sources, for the metaphor of the prison has been known for centuries. Yet it can be argued that Queen Marguerite set off from the moment of rapture when the prisoner is liberated, and worked the motif backward through the Prison of Reason and Science, through the Prison of the vices; Avarice, Ambition and Concupiscence; and ending with Tower of Love and the prison of carnal

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love. Since the prisoner/Free Soul dichotomy is central to the **Miroir** allegory, it is reasonable to assume that Queen Marguerite used it as a point of departure, just as the **Gentil Loing-Près** inspired her spiritual insight in the third book of the **Prisons.**

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Approbatio (The Approbation of Three Clerics)*[a]

Through me, a creature of God[1], the Creator has had this book written which comes from him. And why? I do not know, for it is sufficient for me that it contains divine knowledge. So I hopefully greet you in the love of the peace of charity and of the High Trinity, providing the record of the clerics who have read this book whose lives bear witness to her lineage.

The first of them was a friar minor, well known for his life of perfection, and he was called Brother John. We pass on to you what he said in this letter of love, so please receive it in the courtesy Love requires of you, to the honor of God and of those he has set free. May it also be profitable for those who are not yet free, but God willing, may be so later on.

This friar said that this book was truly made by the Holy Spirit. He said that all the clergy should hear it read, but they may not all understand what it means unless the high working of the Holy Spirit is within them. And he prayed, in God's name, that it should be wisely guarded and that few should see it. He also said that it was so "high" that he himself might not understand it.

After him a Cistercian monk, Dom Frank, cantor of the Abbey of Villiers, read it. He said that it was in full accord with the Scriptures, and true in all things it said.

And then it was read by a master of theology named Master Godfrey of Fontaines. He found no fault in it, just like the others. But he advised that not all should see it because they might leave their own calling by aspiring to this higher calling which they may never reach. And so they may be disappointed, for he said this book has been made by a spirit so strong and fervent that few, or none of such spirits exist. Nevertheless he said that a Soul cannot come to a divine state of being unless she adopts the useages in this book, for all other ways of being are inferior, being human. This alone is the divine way, and none other but this.

This approbation was obtained for the peace of the listeners, and we relate these things to you for your own peace, that this seed may bear holy fruit in all who will hear this book and will be worthy of it (Guarnieri, 638-39; Doiron, 249-50).

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*[a] Cf. introduction, 3-4. All notes in the text appear in the back, keyed to the chapter and note number inside the chapter.

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Here begins the table for finding the chapters of this book, called "The Mirror of Simple and Annihilated Souls who dwell solely in the will and desire of Love."*b

Prologue 31

2. Of Love's enterprise and why she had this book written..... 32
3. Where Love speaks of the commandments of Holy Church..... 32
4. Of the noble virtue of Charity and how she is obedient to Love..... 33
5. Of the life which is call "Peace of Charity in an annihilated life"..... 33
6. How the Soul, enamored of God, and living in the peace of Charity, takes leave of the Virtues..... 35
7. How this Soul is noble and how she accounts for nothing..... 36
8. How Reason is amazed that Soul has quit the Virtues and how Love praises them..... 37
9. How such Souls have no will..... 38
10. How Love names this Soul by twelve names for the actives at the bidding of Reason... 39
11. How, at the request of Reason, Love informs the contemplatives about this Soul, making nine points, which were mentioned earlier.. 40
12. The true understanding of what this book says throughout, that the Annihilated Soul has no will..... 43
13. How Reason is content with the above explanation of guidelines for the contemplatives and actives, but asks more for ordinary people..... 45
14. How this Soul has knowledge of God through Faith..... 47
15. The Holy Sacrament at the altar is discussed here..... 47
16. Here Love answers Reason, concerning what she said about the Soul knowing all and knowing nothing..... 48
17. Here Love answers Reason regarding her statement of how these Souls give Nature what she asks..... 50

*The notes are found at the end of the book.

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18. How such creatures can no longer speak of God..... 51
19. How Faith, Hope, and Charity ask Love for knowledge of these Souls..... 51
20. Love answers Reason regarding her saying that no one except God know such Souls..... 52
21. Love responds to Reason's argument concerning what this book says about the Souls' taking leave of the Virtues..... 53
22. How this Soul is like an eagle and how she takes leave of Nature..... 54
23. How this Soul has two pillars and is drunk on what she never drank..... 54
24. When these Souls are in Pure Love's perfect freedom..... 56
25. Reason asks Love if such Souls experience any inner joy..... 56
26. How this Soul loves nothing outside of God's love..... 57
27. How Meditation of Pure Love has only one expectation..... 57
28. How this Soul swims in the sea of joy..... 58
29. Reason asks Love when this Soul is in Love's pure freedom..... 58
30. How Reason tells Love that she expects this Soul to tell all she can say or speak of about God..... 59
31. How Love comforts the Soul for having given her spouse everything she had..... 60
32. How Love keeps such Souls sane..... 61
33. The Soul is overwhelmed when she considers the gifts of God's goodness..... 63
34. How the Souls says that by herself, she do nothing..... 63
35. How Soul argues with Reason saying that God has loved her with no beginning..... 64
36. How Soul is free and beyond Reason's subjection..... 65
37. Here the Soul says that in Heaven her sins will be known to her great glory..... 66
38. How the Soul recognizes Love's courtesy in perfectly recognizing her poverty..... 67
39. How Reason wants to serve this Soul as a slave..... 67
40. How Love calls this Souls supremely wise and why..... 68
41. How the Soul has no grief from sin, nor hope from the good she ever does..... 69
42. How the Holy Spirit teaches what the Soul knows and wishes she had..... 71

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43. How such Souls are called Holy Church, and what the Holy Church can say about them... 71
44. How the Soul languishes in Love, and how this Soul is dying from Love..... 72
45. How those who have no will live in freedom of charity..... 73
46. How the Soul knows "the most" since in her opinion, she knows nothing of God with respect to his "most"..... 74
47. How the Soul has come to know her nothingness..... 75
48. How a Soul is not free who desires that God's will be done in her to her glory..... 75
49. How the Soul, having no will, is noble..... 76
50. How this Soul is marked by God, as wax from a seal..... 76
51. How this Soul is like the Godhead..... 77
52. How Love praises this Soul, and how she dwells in the abundance and wealth of Divine Love..... 78
53. How Reason requests an explanation of what is said above..... 79
54. Reason asks in what death a Soul must die, according to this book's understanding..... 80
55. How Love answers Reason's questions..... 80
56. How the Virtues complain to Love, who holds them in such low esteem..... 81
57. Of those who are errant and how they are slaves and merchants..... 82
58. How these annihilated Souls are in the fifth state with their Beloved..... 83
59. What this Soul has lived through, and how and when she became "without" herself..... 84
60. How it is fitting to die three deaths in order to achieve a free, annihilated life.. 85
61. Here Love speaks of the seven states of the Soul..... 86
62. Of those who are dead to mortal sin and born in a life of grace..... 87
63. How Soul calls "common" those who think it is enough to be saved..... 88
64. Here we speak of the Souls who are mortified in the life of the Spirit..... 88
65. Here we speak of those who are seated on a high mountain above the wind..... 89
66. How the Soul is joyful at having taken leave of Reason and the other Virtues..... 90
67. Here we talk of the land where this Soul dwells, and of the Trinity..... 90

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68. How by divine work this Soul is joined to the Trinity and how she calls "asses" those who live in counsel of Reason..... 91
69. Here the Souls says that the practice of the Virtues is only worry and toil..... 91
70. How such a Soul is what she is, by the grace of God..... 92
71. How the Soul no longer performs works for God, nor for herself, nor for her neighbors 93
72. Here we speak of the distance from the land of the perished and errant to the land of freedom, and why the Soul has a will..... 93
73. How the spirit must die in order to lose its will..... 95
74. Why Love calls Soul by such a small name as "Soul"..... 96
75. How the Enlightened Soul gives understanding of things already said by the example of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ..... 96
76. Here the example of Magdelene and of the Saints shows the Soul is not ashamed of her sins..... 97
77. Here Soul asks if God has come to the end of the gifts of his goodness..... 98
78. How those who have not obeyed the teaching of perfection remain burdened with themselves until death..... 99
79. How the Freed Soul counsels not to refuse the requests of the good spirit..... 100
80. How the Soul sings and stops singing..... 102
81. How nothing matters to this Soul, not herself, not her neighbor, not even God himself..... 103
82. How this Soul is free in all four quarters. 104
83. How Soul has the name of what Love changed her into..... 105
84. How the Soul and her four quarters are promoted in sovereignty and she freely leads a holy life..... 105
85. How the Soul is free, freer, and freest.... 106
86. How Reason marvels at what Soul says..... 107
87. How this Soul is the queen of the Virtues and a daughter of the Godhead..... 109
88. How Love asks what Reason would ask if she were alive, to find out who is the mother of Reason and of the other Virtues..... 110
89. How the Soul has given up everything in the freedom of her nobility..... 110
90. How one can achieve perfection by doing the opposite of his will..... 111

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91. How the will of these Souls is Love's will and the reason why..... 111
92. How the Soul excludes herself of God, herself, and her neighbor..... 112
93. A description of the peace of a holy life.. 113
94. The language of a holy life..... 114
95. How the land of the errant souls is far from the land of those who are annihilated 114
96. Here the Soul speaks to the Trinity..... 115
97. How Heaven is nothing other than seeing God 116
98. Reason asks what they do, those whose state is above their thoughts..... 117
99. How such people in this state are rulers over all things..... 118
100. How there are great differences among angels, one from another..... 118
101. How this Soul does not want to do anything, so she lacks nothing, not even her Beloved. 119
102. Here Understanding of the Annihilated Soul (pity) shows what happens when evil triumphs over good..... 120
103. Here is revealed the meaning of "the just fall seven times daily"..... 121
104. Here the Soul explains how God has given her free will..... 121
105. The meaning of "the just fall seven times daily"..... 122
106. How Soul declares the summary of her requests..... 123
107. Here begin the Soul's requests..... 123
108. A beautiful consideration to avoid sin..... 124
109. How the Soul is amazed at not being able to sufficiently pay for her failings..... 125
110. How a creature's art is a subtle craft found in the substance of the Soul..... 126
111. The difference between the unction of peace and the war which causes reproach and guilt of conscience..... 127
112. Of the eternal goodness which is eternal love..... 128
113. Contemplating the passion of Jesus Christ results in victory over ourselves..... 129
114. If a human creature can remain alive and still be without herself..... 129
115. The eternal substance, and how Love engenders the Trinity in the Soul..... 130
116. How the Soul rejoices in the trials of her neighbors..... 130
117. How the Soul shows that she is an example of salvation for all creatures..... 131

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118. Of the seven states of the devout Soul which are elsewhere called "beings"..... 133
119. How the Soul who had this book written is sorry for having made it so long and wordy, which could have otherwise been short and brief to the Souls who dwell in nothingness and who have fallen through love to this state..... 138
120. How Truth praises these Souls..... 139
121. Holy Church praises this Soul..... 140
122. Where the Soul begins her song..... 142

Here are some considerations for those in an errant State who ask the way to the land of the free.

123. The first consideration is from the apostles..... 146
124. The second consideration is of Mary Magdalene..... 146
125. The third consideration concerning St. John the Baptist..... 149
126. The fourth consideration is of the Virgin Mary..... 150
127. The fifth consideration is how divine nature is joined to human nature in the person of the Son..... 151
128. The sixth consideration is how the humanity of the Son of God was tortured for us.. 152
129. The seventh consideration is of the Seraphim, and how they are united to divine will..... 152
130. Here the Soul speaks of three beautiful thoughts and considerations and how she knows less about power, wisdom, and divine goodness than she know of her weakness, stupidity, and wickedness..... 153
131. Here the Soul says that she wants only the will of God..... 154
132. How Justice, Mercy, and Love come to the Soul when she has left her childhood behind 157
133. Here the Soul says that the above considerations are for the errant, and again shows who they are, and how these considerations are of the life of the spirit..... 158
134. How the Soul is in a state of perfection when Holy Church cannot use her life as an example..... 160
135. How they are deceived, those who think it is enough to be guided by the life of the spirit's affections..... 160

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136. How all work is forbidden to the annihilated Soul..... 161
137. How this Soul is professed in her religion and how well she has kept the rule..... 162
138. How the Soul returns to her former state... 162
139. How Nature is subtle in various ways..... 163

Explicit

Deo gratias

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You who will read in this book,
If you want to understand it well,
Think about what you will say,
For it is hard to understand;
You must take on Humility,
The treasurer of Science,
And the mother of the other Virtues.

You, theologians and other clerics,
Will not be able to understand it
(However clever your clerics be),
If you do not proceed humbly,
And unless Love and Faith,
The mistresses of the house,
Lead you to overcome Reason.

Reason herself claims unabashedly,
In the thirteenth chapter
Of this book,
That Love and Faith make her live,
And she is never free from them,
For they are her sovereign,
And she must therefore obey them.

So let the sciences be humbled,
Which are founded upon Reason,
And put all your trust
In those [sciences] that are given
By Love and enlightened by Faith,
And thus you will understand this book
By which Love makes the Soul live.

Explicit

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PROLOGUE

O Soul touched by God, and rid of sin in the first state of grace, you have ascended by divine grace to the seventh degree of grace, to the fullest perfection through divine fruition of life's peace.

(Love speaks to the Soul): To you, the actives and contemplatives and even you who are annihilated[1] through true love, hear now of the power of Pure Love, of noble Love, of the high love of the Freed Soul, and of how the Holy Spirit has set his sail[2] in the Soul as in her own ship. Through Love I beg you, to hear and to diligently understand in your innermost being, this Soul's state. Otherwise those who are not like this might misunderstand what they will hear.

Now humbly listen to a simple example of worldly love which tells also of divine love:[3]

Once upon a time there was a princess in a far-off land with a warm and noble heart who was of noble courage. Now it happened that this damsel heard tell of the great chivalry and nobility of King Alexander, and by and by she fell in love with him by repute of his gentility.

But this damsel lived far away from the great lord to whom she had pledged her love, and could neither see him nor have him by her side; so she was often distressed for no other love could satisfy her. And when she saw that this far-away love seemed so close within her, she decided to comfort her longing by having an image made in the likeness of her lover whose image was engraved on her heart. Thus she had an image painted which represented the likeness of the king she loved, the closest possible representation of the one she loved, with the affection of the love which had overcome her, and she dreamed of him through this image along with her other customary practices[4].

(Soul, responding to Love, who had this book written): It would truly seem that I am quite the same: I heard tell of a great and powerful king, who, by his chivalry and generosity, and by his courtly nobility is like the noble Alexander. But he was so far from me and I from him that I could not be comforted, and as a token of my remembrance of him, he gave me this book which describes the practice of his love. But it is only an image that I have, for am I not in a strange country and far away from the palace where the fine and noble friends of this Lord dwell, who are completely pure, refined and freed by the gifts of the King with whom they dwell?

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(The Author): And for this reason we will tell you of how our Lord is in no way freed from Love, yet Love is liberated by him for us, in order that the little ones[5] can hear him in your stead; for Love will do nothing hurtful.

(And thus Love speaks for you): There are seven states of noble being[6] from which a creature receives her being, and she must resolve all the states before she becomes a perfect being; and we will explain how in the course of this book.

Chapter 2. Of Love's enterprise and why she had this book made

(Love): O you, children of Holy Church, I have had this book made for you so that you might have what is best--life's perfection and the state of peace, to which a creature can aspire through the exercise of perfect charity. This gift, given by the whole Trinity, is a gift that will be explained to you in this book as Love responds to the questions of Reason.

Chapter 3. Where Love speaks of the commandments of Holy Church

(Love): Let us begin, with the commandments of Holy Church, so that each might have a green pasture, with God's help, who commands that we love him with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our might, and ourselves also as we must; and our neighbors also as ourselves[1].

First that we love God "with all our heart". This means that our thoughts must truly always be in him. And "with all our soul". This means that we should speak only the truth, even unto death. And "with all our might" means that all our deeds should be done solely for him. "And ourselves as we must." Not that we hope to profit for ourselves, but that we do the perfect will of God. "And our neighbors as ourselves." This means that we neither do, nor think, nor say anything toward our neighbors which we would not wish them to do to us. These commandments are all that is necessary for our salvation; with a lesser life there is no grace.

Take the example of the rich young man who told Jesus Christ he had kept the commandments all his life, and Jesus Christ said to him: "One thing you must do if you want to be perfect. It is this: Go and sell all the things you have and give them to the poor, and then if you follow me

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you will have the treasure of heaven."[2] This is the counsel of perfection in the virtues, and those who hold fast to it will live in true charity.

Chapter 4. Of the noble virtue of Charity and how she is obedient to Love[1]

(Love): Charity obeys no created thing except Love. Charity owns nothing, and whatever she has she denies that it is hers.

Charity leaves her own needs to fulfill the needs of others.

Charity asks no reward from another creature for whatever good or pleasure she has done.

Charity feels neither shame, fear nor distress; she is so upright that she does not flinch from whatever happens to her.

Charity neither holds nor heeds anything under the sun; the whole world is her territory and her domain.

Charity gives to all whatever she has of value, not even withholding herself, and often through her own great generosity, promises what she doesn't have in the hope that the more she gives the more she will have to give.

Charity is like a wise merchant, in that while others lose, she always gains, escaping the ties that bind others, and thus she multiplies greatly in things pleasing to Love.

And note this: one who would have perfect charity must first die, effecting the perfected life of the Spirit through the work of Charity.

Chapter 5. Of the life which is called "Peace of Charity in an annihilated life"

(Love): Now there is another life which we call the "Peace of Charity in an annihilated life." We wish to speak of this life, proposing that one can find:

1. a soul
2. who is saved through faith without works,

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3. who is alone in love,
4. who does nothing for God,
5. who leaves nothing to God,
6. to whom nothing can be taught,
7. from whom nothing can be stolen,
8. nor given,
9. and who has no will.

Alas! And who will give this Soul what she needs, for if nothing were ever given her she would have nothing to give?

This Soul has six wings, like the Seraphim.[1] She wants nothing that comes through an intermediary. Such is the pure state of the Seraphim: there is no intermediary between their love and divine love. They always receive his message without an intermediary, and the same is true for this Soul who does not seek divine knowledge from the masters of this century, but rather scorns this world and herself. My God! What a big difference there is between love given through an intermediary and love which comes directly from the Beloved!

How well this book has truthfully told of this Soul having six wings like the Seraphim! With two wings she covers the face of Jesus Christ our Lord. This means that the more this Soul knows of divine goodness, the more perfectly she knows that she knows nothing, even concerning the slightest glimmer of his goodness, for nothing of this is understood, except by God.[2]

With two other wings she covers his feet. This means that the more she understands Jesus Christ's suffering for us, the more perfect is her knowledge that she knows nothing about it at all. For concerning what he suffered for us nothing is known, except by him.

With two other [wings] the Soul flies, and in her being she remains seated. This means that everything that she knows, loves, and praises of divine goodness is contained in the wings with which she flies. She remains in her being, for she is always in the sight of God. And seated, because she abides constantly in the divine will.

Now how, and of what, would such a Soul be afraid? Surely she would have nothing to fear or doubt, for although she is in the world, and while it is possible that the flesh and the devil, the four elements[2] and the

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birds of the air and the beasts of the wild might torment, dismember and devour her, yet she loses nothing if she dwells in God. Yet he is all in all, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-goodness. He is our father, brother and our loyal friend. He is without beginning. He is incomprehensible outside of himself. He is without end, three persons in one God; such is the Beloved of our souls.

Chapter 6. How the Soul, enamored of God, and living in the peace of Charity, takes leave of the Virtues

(Love): This Soul, with such love, can say to the Virtues that she has been long, and for many a day in their service.

(Soul): Lady Love, I must confess; I have been with them here for a long while, but now there is another; and through your courtesy I am no longer in their service. And for their sake I now say and sing:

Virtues, I take leave of you
for evermore:
Serving you is too costly,
indeed I know.
For a while I set my heart on you
unwaveringly;
You know that I was surrendered to you
totally:
Then I was your slave,
now I am delivered.
In you had I placed my whole heart,
indeed I know:
For a while I lived
greatly discouraged.
I suffered in great torment,
endured much pain;
It is a wonder
that I came out alive.
But since it is thus, never mind:

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I am free of you.
Thanks be to God on high;
for to me a new day has come!
I have left your prison,
where I suffered gravely.
Never could I be free,
except separate from you;
Departed am I from your prison:
I dwell now in peace.

Chapter 7. How this Soul is noble and how she accounts for nothing

(Love): This Soul takes account of neither shame nor honor, neither poverty nor wealth, neither leisure nor cares, neither love nor hate, neither Hell nor Heaven.

(Reason): For God's sake, Love, what do you mean by that?

(Love): What is the meaning? Surely this is known exclusively to those who have God-given understanding, and to none other. It is not found in the Scriptures, it is beyond human understanding, and creaturely effort is not worthy to hear or fathom it. Instead this gift is granted by the Almighty, and a creature is astounded by this plentiful knowledge, which has been lost. Then such a Soul, having become nothing, is everything, yet she has nothing. She wants everything and wants nothing; she knows all and knows nothing.

(Reason): And how can it be, Lady Love, that this Soul could want what is written in this book, which stated earlier that she has no will?

(Love): Reason, it is not her own will which wants it, it is rather the will of God working through her; for this Soul does not dwell in Love, exerting her own will through desiring nothing. Rather it is Love, dwelling in her, who has taken her will and that is why Love works her will in the Soul, working with her and without her, so she remains without care or concern.

This Soul can no longer speak of God for she is stripped naked of all her outward desires, of all her inner feelings and of any spiritual affection; so that the Soul's actions are guided by her good habits or by

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the command of Holy Church. She desires nothing, for her will, which might prompt desire in her, is dead.

Chapter 8. How Reason is amazed that Soul has quit the Virtues and how Love praises them

(Reason, who understands only the rough and not the refined): So Love, what is so great about this? This Soul has no perception of grace or any spiritual desire since she has taken leave of those Virtues which furnished her with a good and kindly life. Without these Virtues no one can be saved, nor can they come into a perfected life. The one who has them will not be deceived, yet nevertheless this Soul took leave of them. Isn't she out of her mind to speak this way?

(Love): Certainly not! Such Souls are without fault, for they have greater virtue than all the other creatures, for they are not the same as they used to be, and they no longer need to be enslaved by practicing the virtues.

(Reason): But Love, when were they slaves?

(Love): When they were dwelling in your love and obedience, Lady Reason, to you and to the other Virtues, and in so remaining they have now became free.

(Reason): And when do such Souls become free?

(Love): When Love lives in them and when the Virtues serve them without opposition or without any effort from these souls. For surely Reason, these Souls, so newly freed, know from their experience what Dominion was capable of doing, and if someone were to ask them about the greatest torment a creature could suffer, they would say it would be to dwell in Love while in obedience to the Virtues. For it is proper to give the Virtues everything they ask, whatever the cost to Nature. The Virtues insist upon honor and possessions, heart, body, and life; in other words, as long as such Souls give up everything, keeping nothing to comfort Nature, the Virtues keep telling her, who has given them everything she has, retaining nothing to comfort Nature, "It is hard for the righteous to be saved."[1] So much does this miserable Soul still serve the Virtues, that she says she would rather be thrashed by Fear and tormented in Hell until Judgment Day, if only she could be saved from their dominion.

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It's true that a Soul lives in bondage while the Virtues have power over her. But the Souls we speak of have reduced the Virtues to nothing, for these Souls do nothing for them. Instead, the Virtues, without dominion or opposition, do everything these Souls want, for these Souls have become their masters.

Chapter 9. How such Souls have no will

(Love): Whoever would ask such liberated Souls, secure and peaceful, if asked if they would like to be in Purgatory, they would say no. If asked if they would like to be certain in this life of their salvation, they would say no. If asked if they would want to be in Paradise, they would say no. But then what would they want? They have no will. And if they wanted anything, they would separate themselves from Love. Love, having their will, knows what is good for them, and that suffices them, without knowledge and without further assurance. Such Souls live in the knowledge of Love and of praise. Their usual state of being is that such Souls don't move about, since Knowledge, Love, and Praise dwell in their midst. Such Souls can't tell whether they are good or evil, and having no self-knowledge, they cannot judge whether they will be converted or perverted.

Let us take one Soul as a brief example: This Soul neither desires nor despises poverty nor tribulation, a mass or a sermon, or a fast or a prayer, giving Nature all she requires, without conscious remorse. Her nature is so well developed and transformed into the unity of love, to which her will is joined, that Nature asks nothing that would be forbidden. Such a Soul doesn't worry about what she is lacking, except in the hour of her need. Only the innocent can be without this worry.[1]

(Reason): Now, in God's name, what does that mean?

(Love): This is my reply. As I told you before I will tell you again: neither the greatest scientists nor the great theologians, nor even those who seek love by obeying the Virtues, none of them understand,[2] nor will they understand what is essential. And be certain of this, Reason, for no one can understand except the one who seeks Pure Love. But if you encountered such Souls, they would speak truthfully if they wanted to, but

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I do not believe that just anyone will be able to understand, except one who seeks Pure Love and Charity.

This gift can be given at any moment; and once you possess it you must take care of it, for it is God's most perfect gift to his creatures. Such a Soul is a pupil of the Godhead and is found in the valley of Humility, and in the plain of Truth,[3] and finds rest on the mountain of Love.

Chapter 10. How Love names this Soul by twelve names for the actives[1] at the bidding of Reason

(Reason): Now Love, give this Soul her proper name; give it so the actives may know it.

(Love): She can be known by the following twelve names:

The truly marvelous.
The unknown.
The most innocent daughter of Jerusalem.[2]
She upon whom the entire Holy Church is founded.
She who is illuminated with knowledge.
Love's adornment.
The vitality of praise.
The denial[3] of all things through humility.
The peace in divine being by divine will.
The fulfillment and unfailing plenitude by divine goodness,
through the work of the Trinity.
Her final name is Forgetfulness.
These twelve names are given to her by Love.

(Pure Courtesy): And without doubt, it is right that she should be so named, for these names are proper ones for her.

(Reason): Now, Love, you have given this Soul many names by which the actives may know her, if only through hearing these truly noble names you have given her.

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hapter 11. How, at the request of Reason, Love informs the contemplatives[1] about this Soul, making nine points, which were mentioned earlier

(Reason): Now listen, Love: I ask you now for the sake of the contemplatives who wish to grow continually in divine knowledge and who exist and dwell in the desire of Love. Be so gracious as to explain the nine points which you spoke about earlier;[2] these nine points possessed by the Soul in whom Charity dwells, and who pursues Fine Love, and who is placed in a life of nothingness being abandoned by Pure Love.

(Love): Reason, name them!

(Reason): The first point, as you have said, is that no one can find such a Soul.

(Love): It's true. It means that this Soul knows of herself only one thing: that she is the root of all evil containing the abundance of all sin, countless, weightless and immeasurable. Now her sin may be nothing, yet the Soul is totally stunned and horrified by her dreadful faults, which are less than nothing. So by this insight the Soul feels herself less than nothing, as she is. One can conclude that this Soul cannot be found, for such a Soul is so nullified by humility that, according to her righteous judgment, if God ever chose to take vengeance upon the thousandth part of her failings, not a single creature who ever sinned would be worthy of such great torment or of such great and endless confusion as she. This is true humility, perfected only in the Annihilated Soul.

The second point is that this Soul saves herself by faith without works.

(Reason): For God's sake, what does that mean?

(Love): It means that this Annihilated Soul bears such great knowledge within her, acquired by Faith, and she is so busy sustaining what Faith administers to her of the Father's power, the Son's wisdom and the goodness of the Holy Spirit, so that no created thing can remain in her recollection, but passes fleetingly through it, because of the Annihilated Soul's other preoccupations. She can no longer perform works; instead she is excused and acquitted without exception from work, knowing that God is good and incomprehensible. She is saved by Faith without works, for Faith surpasses all works through the witness of Love.

The third point is that she is alone in love.

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(Reason): For God's sake, Lady Love, what does this mean?

(Love): It means that this Soul has no comfort, affection or hope in any creature of God, in Heaven or on earth, but only in the goodness of God. Such a Soul will not beg or ask anything of a creature. Like a phoenix[3] she is alone; for this Soul is alone in love, sufficient unto herself.

The fourth point is that this Soul does nothing for God.

(Reason): For God's sake, what does this mean?

(Love): It means that God has His own work to do and this Soul need not concern herself with what God has to do. It doesn't matter to her; it matters to God, who loves her more than she can love herself! This Soul has such great faith in God that she is not afraid of being poor when her love is so rich. Faith teaches that she will find whatever she hopes for in God, and she hopes through Faith that he is rich so that she will not be poor.

The fifth point is that the Soul leaves nothing for God to do that she can do herself.

(Reason): For God's sake, what does this mean?

(Love): It means that she can do nothing outside the will of God, but also that she cannot will otherwise; and by this she leaves nothing for God to do. She allows nothing to enter her thought which might be against God, and thus she leaves God nothing to do.

The sixth point is that she can be taught nothing.

(Reason): For God's sake, what does this mean?

(Love): It means that this Soul is so faithful that even if she possessed all the knowledge of all creatures who ever were, are, or who are to come, it would be nothing to her compared to the One she loves, who never was, is, or will ever be known. This Soul prefers the attributes of God which cannot be given in the past, present, or future, to all that she has or would be given, even if she could have all the knowledge of all creatures now and who are to come.

(Soul): Yet still it is nothing compared to what God really has, but nothing can be said of this.

(Love): The seventh point is that nothing can be taken from her.

(Reason): In God's name, Love, explain what this means!

(Love): What does it mean? And what could anyone take from her?

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Surely no one could steal from her. Yet anyone robbing her of wealth and love, heart, body, and life would deprive her of nothing if she dwells in God. Thus it seems that no one can steal anything from her, however strong they may be.

The eighth point is that nothing can be given to her.

(Reason): Love, for God's sake, what does it mean that nothing can be given to her?

(Love): What does it mean? And what could anyone give her? If she were given everything that ever was or will be given, that would be nothing compared to what she loves and will love, if not God himself.

(Soul): Lady Love loves and will love in me!

(Love): With all due respect, I haven't gotten there yet!

(To the hearers): We simply say that God prefers "the most" in this Soul which is from him, to "the least" that is in herself.[4]

(Soul replies): There is no "least"; there is only "the all"; and this I can truthfully say.

(Love): I say, moreover, that this Soul contains all the knowledge, love and praise which were ever given or will ever be given by the Holy Trinity, but this would be nothing compared to what she loves and will love; yet this love cannot be attained through knowledge.

(Soul speaks to Love): But of course, sweet Love. I wouldn't attain even the slightest without "the most" of my love, for there is no one other than God who can perfectly know this. For he alone is my God, of whom no words can be spoken; not even the heavenly host, knowing all they do of him, could ever attain it. This "most" contains Love's sovereign mortification of my spirit which is Love's entire glory in my soul, now and forever, for all who have ever understood themselves. Yet this is but a trifle compared to the greater things of which no one speaks. I wanted to talk about them, but I don't know what to say. Nevertheless, Lady Love, my love is of such a persuasion that I'd rather have what is not true about you than have people say nothing about you. And admittedly, I say what is not true, for everything which I say of you is nothing but untruth. Even though I speak wrongly you must forgive me. Lord, one who maligns you is constantly speaking of you, even though he never says anything of your goodness! And this is what I, myself do. I have not ceased speaking of you, to question, to think, and to hear others speak of your goodness; but

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the more I hear tell of you, the more I am amazed. For it would be very harmful if I believed a single thing they said, and those who believe it are deceived. I know for certain that nothing can be said, and God willing, I will no longer be led astray. I don't wish to hear them lie about God's goodness until I have accomplished the work of this book, whose master is Love. So I will ask nothing of Love for myself; for her own sake, alone I will lead the life of the Spirit, in the shadow of the sun where one can see the subtle images and attractions of divine love and of divine creativity.

(To Reason): And what do I say? Supposing I had all of this, still surely this is nothing compared to my love for him. This thing he reserves only for himself, for it is proper that he retain it for the sake of his divine righteousness. And so I truly say that nothing in existence can be given to me. Please understand, Lady Reason, this complaint which you hear me voice is my all and my best. And oh, in God's name, how sweet is this discernment, for once grasped, it is like Paradise!

(Love): The ninth point, Lady Reason, is that this Soul has no will.

(Reason): For the love of God, what are you saying: "this Soul has no will"?

(Love): But of course, for everything this Soul wishes by her consent is what God wills her to want, to be accomplished through the will of God and not her own. This volition is not of her own making but through the will of God, who wills in her. So it seems that she has no volition without God's willing, who makes her want everything she should will.

Chapter 12. The true understanding of what this book says throughout, that the Annihilated Soul has no will

(Love): Now listen to and understand well, hearers of this book, the true explanation of what is said throughout this book: The Annihilated Soul has no will, nor can she have any, nor can she wish to have any, and as such the will of God is perfectly accomplished. And not until then is the Soul satisfied in Divine Love, nor is Divine Love satisfied in the Soul, until the Soul is in God and God is in the Soul, in him, by him, seated in his divine being; only then is the Soul completely satisfied.

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(Reason's Understanding): Indeed, but it seems that the ninth point says the opposite, for it says that the Annihilated Soul can will nothing concerning what she would like to will; such a volition she cannot have, since God wills that she would have no volition concerning her sufficiency, which will never be accorded her.

(Reason): Thus I conclude that the Soul wants to will, and that God wants her to have a will, which she cannot have, and in this she is lacking and unfulfilled.

(Reason's Understanding): It seems, Lady Love, that this ninth point leads me to this understanding by contradicting this book. It truly says that the Free Soul has no will, cannot have one, cannot wish to have one, nor does the divine Unity want her to have one, yet she has everything, according to this book, through Divine Love and her fullness.

(Annihilated Soul): O Reason's Understanding, what scruples you have! You take the chaff and leave the wheat,[1] for your understanding is too low; you can't raise your vision to a level appropriate to the state of which we speak. But Divine Love's Understanding, who dwells and exists in the Annihilated Soul who is fully freed, comprehends fully without hindrance, for she is in that state herself.

(Exalted Understanding of Love): Hear this, Reason's Understanding. Learn now how rough your reasoning is. If this Annihilated Soul desires God's will--and the more she wants it the more she wants to want it--as a mere creature she is limited, for God retains the majesty of his divine righteousness. However, God wills her to will, and he also wills that she have this volition; such a will is divine will, such a will gives rise to a free creature in whom God wills, in whom God ordains her will, invigorating her veins with divine Wisdom, her marrow with Divine Love in the unity of divine praise. The will of the Soul seals them within.

(Love): Yet, how can the Soul will since Clear Knowledge knows that there is one state among all others which is the noblest of all? A creature cannot possess it except through non-willing.

Now Reason has heard the answers to all her questions with one exception, where Reason says that the Freed Soul remains dissatisfied. Therefore I will explain how she lacks sufficiency. It is in willing the divine will: the more she wants it the less she is concerned for her own sufficiency. This same will is God's only will and the glory of the Soul.[2]

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Chapter 13. How Reason is content with the above explanation of guidelines for the contemplatives and actives, but asks more for ordinary people

(Reason): Now, Love, you have graciously answered our questions--that is to say that you have declared the guidelines concerning actives and contemplatives. But I beg you to explain them for the ordinary people, some of whom may aspire to this state, for there are many double words which are beyond their comprehension. If you'll explain them, this book will demonstrate to all the one true light, the perfection of charity to those precious ones whom God has chosen and called in his sovereignty to love him.

(Love): Reason, where are these double words which you wish me to explain and clarify for the profit of those on whose behalf you request, and also for the people who read this book which we will entitle, **Mirror of Simple Souls Who Dwell in Will and Desire**?

(Reason): My reply, Lady Love, is that the book expresses great admiration for this Soul in the seventh chapter, where it says that this Soul takes account of neither shame nor honor, neither poverty nor wealth, neither leisure nor cares, neither love nor hatred, neither Hell nor Heaven. In this saying the Soul has all and nothing: she knows all and knows nothing, she wills all and wills nothing as written above in the ninth chapter. And then it says she despises neither poverty, martyrdom nor tribulation; she needs neither sermons, fasts, nor prayers, and she gives Nature all she asks without conscious remorse.

Certainly, Love, my understanding cannot fathom this unless you impart it through your own teaching. Yet, to the best of my own knowledge, mind, and counsel, I teach that one should welcome scorn, poverty, and all varieties of tribulations along with masses, sermons, fasts, and prayers; and that one should fear all kinds of love, whatever they may be, for the perils they can hold. And above all, one should seek Heaven, fearing Hell; and that one must refuse all sorts of honor, worldly things and all comforts, ignoring Nature's demands--except those which are essential for life--following the example of the suffering and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the best advice I can offer to those who obey my teaching.

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So to those who follow my teaching, I say that they will not fathom this book, unless they understand it by virtue of Faith and through the power of Love, my masters whom I obey in everything. I would still like to add: that whosoever has two strings in his bow (that is to say, the light of Faith and the power of Love) is free to do whatever he pleases. As Love herself testifies to the Soul, "Beloved, love and do what you will!"[1]

(Love): Reason, you are very wise and sure in what pertains to you, and in wishing a response to your previous words. But since you have asked me what it means, I will answer all your questions. I can guarantee, Reason, that once such a Soul is ruled by Fine Love, it cherishes disgrace as well as honor, honor as disgrace; poverty as wealth, likewise wealth as poverty. She values torment from God and his creatures as comfort from God and his creatures; and to be hated as if loved, and to be loved as if hated, in Hell as in Heaven, in Heaven as in Hell; being humble as well as great, and being great as well as humble, for her own sake and for her people. Truth knows this well, and thus such Souls neither will nor despise any prosperity or adversity, since they have no will save God's within them, and the divine will is not interested in overcoming creatures and hindrances such as those we have described.

I have just stated that such Souls cherish all spiritual adversities, whether of the body or the soul, such as prosperity, and prosperity as much as adversity. This is true if they occur by happenstance, but their will won't be the cause. For such Souls do not know what is best for them, nor in what manner God wills to accomplish their salvation or that of their neighbors, nor how God will do justice or mercy, or how God will bestow the unsurpassable gifts of his divine and noble bounty to the Soul. For all this, the Freed Soul has no will either to want or not to want, except by desiring the will of God and by peacefully submitting to the divine command.

(Reason): Still, Lady Love, I would add one thing to my question, regarding what this book says the Soul has and doesn't have.

(Love): It's true, for this Soul has God through divine grace, and one who has God, has everything. And she also has nothing, for everything this Soul has within her from God, by gift of divine grace, seems like nothing to her. Likewise, considering whom she loves and who is within her, he will give such a thing to none other than himself. According to

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this understanding, this Soul has all and nothing, she knows all and she knows nothing.

Chapter 14. How this Soul has knowledge of God through Faith

(Love): She knows by virtue of faith that God is all-powerful and all-knowing, and of perfect goodness, and that God the Father did the work of the incarnation, as did the Son as well as the Holy Spirit. As God the Father has joined human nature in the person of God the Son, the person of God the Son has joined it to his own person, and God the Holy Spirit has joined it to the person of God the Son. While God the Father has, in himself, one single nature, the divine nature, the person of God the Son has three natures: the same nature as the Father, the nature of the Soul and the nature of the body, being one person of the Trinity; so the Holy Spirit possesses the same divine nature as the Father and the Son. This belief, this saying, this thought is true contemplation; it is a power, a knowing, and a will: one God in three persons; three persons in one God. God is everywhere by his divine nature, but his humanity, joined to the person of the Son, is glorified only in Heaven, apart from the Sacrament at the altar.

Chapter 15. The Holy Sacrament at the altar is discussed here

(Love): True Christians receive this divinity and this humanity when they take the Holy Sacrament at the altar. How this humanity dwells in them is taught by Faith and known by the clerics.

(Light of Faith): And we shall see how this humanity dwells with them in this simile:

Take the Sacrament and put it in a mortar with other things, and grind the Sacrament so that you cannot see or feel the Person you have put in.

(Faith): I tell you truly that it is not there, since it may not be seen or felt. To this you may answer, "What has become of it?"

(Truth): No, it was there, but now it is not (understand this fully, not in the way of humanity). Then you can ask if it went away just as it came. I tell you that the humanity of Jesus Christ doesn't come and go.

(Temptation): And how can this be?

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(Truth): It was there when one could see and feel it; and now it is not there because it can't be seen or felt: God's power has ordained it. And this humanity itself, which is in the Sacrament at the altar, is not seen in any other way. Even the angels, the saints or the Virgin Mary do not see it other than as we see it, by spiritual understanding. To see the humanity of Jesus Christ or the Sacrament at the altar glorified is not part of the glory of those who are glorified, because they don't see glory except by understanding.

(Faith's Souls): We see it by virtue of faith, contrary to our common sense, which only sees bread without feeling, tasting, or smelling anything else. But our faith contradicts our senses, for faith believes firmly and without doubt that there is neither whiteness, odor, nor taste, only the precious body of Jesus Christ, who is the true God and the true man. So we see by faith while the glorified ones do not, for those in glory[2] don't use faith and thus they don't see the way we do. The Holy Trinity has ordained that the Holy Sacrament of the Altar be thus for the assurance, nourishment and sustenance of Holy Church. This is the ordinance of the Sacrament of the Altar, enlightened by the Holy Trinity by divine power, according to the knowledge of God and what I believe.

(Courtesy of Love's Goodness): Do not be amazed by these things we tell you through Love, for I affirm, without reproach, that one cannot build a deep foundation or a high edifice unless one approaches with natural wisdom and delicacy in the Light of the Spirit's Understanding. One cannot completely know the Divine Will. Indeed, Understanding gives light, showing the Soul what it naturally loves; and the Soul, receiving the Light of Understanding, draws nearer and joins, by peaceful union in plentiful love, to the Being she leans upon for her support and her rest. Gladly she hears Knowledge and Light, who bring her news of her Beloved, for she comes from Love and wants to go back. So she has only one desire in Love, the single will of the one she loves.

Chapter 16. Here Love answers Reason, concerning what she said about the Soul knowing all and knowing nothing

(Love): Reason, concerning what I said about the Freed Soul knowing all and knowing nothing, I reply to you that she knows by virtue of faith

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what she needs to know for her salvation, and that she knows nothing about how God is within her and for her,[1] God, who will give to none but her. By this understanding the Soul knows all and nothing.

She wants everything and nothing, for this Soul so perfectly wants the will of God that she neither knows, nor can she want anything through her own will other than the will of God, so securely has Love enclosed her in a strong prison. And yet she wants nothing, for what she wants, and what God wants in her is such a small thing compared to what she would want to will that she cannot have what God wants her to will. Indeed, her will is nothing compared to what could satisfy her and what she will never have. For that is the will of God's will, as stated earlier. By this understanding, therefore, this Soul wants all and wants nothing.

This daughter of Zion desires no masses, sermons, fasts, or prayers.

(Reason): And why, Lady Love? That is the pasture of holy souls.

(Love): That's true for the mendicants,[2] but she doesn't beg, for she doesn't need or desire anything apart from herself. Now listen, Reason. Why would she desire the things mentioned above, since God gets along equally well with or without them? This Soul has no thought, word, or work outside the gracious practices of the Holy Trinity. She doesn't worry about the sins she has committed or what God has suffered for her, or about the sins and concerns of those who dwell in her midst.

(Reason): By God! And what is the meaning of this, Love? Teach me this since you have satisfied all my other questions.

(Love): It means that this Soul doesn't possess anything which would cause her to worry since her thought is seated in a peaceful place, in the Trinity, where she cannot move or worry, since she is at ease with her Beloved. But if someone falls into sin, or ever commits a sin, her will would be displeased, as would be God's; for his displeasure is the source of her own displeasure. But nevertheless, the Trinity does not worry about her displeasure, or that of any like Soul who is seated there. But if this Soul, so highly seated, could help her neighbors, she would help them in their need with all her might. But the thoughts of such souls are so holy that they are not distracted by passing things or things created, for they would give rise to worry, and God's goodness is beyond such concerns.

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Chapter 17. Here Love answers Reason regarding her statement of how these Souls give Nature what she asks

(Love): This Soul gives Nature whatever she asks of her. It is true that her love and esteem for temporal things is not so great that she would stand to gain anything by refusing Nature's demands. Instead she would have scruples over taking anything from Nature that was hers. But such creatures are so excellent that one doesn't dare speak to them openly, especially about their practices which bring these souls to a good undertanding, and there are indeed very few who taste such an understanding.

I repeat that one does not dare to speak to them openly, and certainly not, for simple people might be harmed by misunderstanding.

Touching upon their practices, the Souls this book speaks of have, by the righteousness of their condition, a pure and divine being and such an inner condition, that having nothing and being certain that they must live until Judgment Day, they could not worry for a single hour about anything they needed, except in the measure of Nature's needs, in order to give her what is her own. And whatever these Souls possess (if there are any, for not many people know where they are, although there must be some, through Love's righteous goodness, to sustain the faith of Holy Church) therefore, such Souls would never keep whatever they have, knowing that others have greater needs than themselves, even in the certainty that the earth would never again produce bread, wheat, or any further sustenance.

And this is the truth, and do not doubt it. Her nature is such by pure righteousness, which is called Divine Justice, who gives character to this Soul.

(Divine Justice): That is right! All justice must be accomplished in her. If she kept what her neighbor needs, she would be retaining what is not hers, according to the perfection of charity's peace by which she wholly lives, for this is her proper pasture. Furthermore, why would such a Soul be scrupulous about taking what she needs when necessity beckons her? To Such a Soul it would be a lack of innocence and an impediment to the peace in which she rests. Why should she have qualms over taking what she needs from the four elements:[1] the sky's clarity, the fire's warmth, the water's dew, or from the earth which sustains us? We make use of these four elements in all manner of natural needs, without reproach from Reason. These

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elements, like all other things, are made by the grace of God. Therefore such Souls use all things made and created which Nature requires with complete peace of mind, just as they use the ground they walk upon.

(Love): They have a sure foundation and a high edifice which keeps them at rest in all things.[2]

Chapter 18. How such creatures can no longer speak of God

(Soul): These creatures can no longer speak of God, for knowing no longer **where** God is, they can no longer say **who** God is. For whoever speaks of God whenever and to whomever he wishes, and wherever he wishes to speak, must know without doubt that he will never feel Love's true and holy core, for it captivates the Soul without her being aware of it. For the pure heart of Divine Love is without physical substance, given to the creature by the Creator. The customary experience of such Souls is to comprehend much and soon forget because of the subtlety of the Beloved.

Chapter 19. How Faith, Hope, and Charity ask Love for knowledge of these Souls

(Faith, Hope and Charity): O Holy Trinity, where are these transcendent Souls this book describes? Who are they, where are they, and what do they do? Teach us by your Love, which knows all, to pacify those who would be dismayed by hearing this book. If the entire Holy Church were to hear this read, they would be amazed.

(Faith): It is true.

(Love): It's true of the Small Holy Church which is governed by Reason, but not for the Great Holy Church, which is governed by us.[1]

(Love, to the three Godly virtues): Now tell me, why do you ask us who they are, where they are and what they do? Certainly you must know that nothing created by God can find them! You three know where they are, for you are with them all the time, and so you make them noble. Also you know what they do. But as for who they are--speaking of their value and dignity--no one--and not even the Holy Church, can know this.

(Reason): And who then, for God's sake, knows this?

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(Love): God alone, who created and redeemed them and perhaps even recreated them many times; they are exiled for the sake of his love alone, annihilated, and forgotten. Why should Holy Church wonder if the Virtues serve these high celestial Souls? And why wouldn't they? Aren't all these Virtues praised, ordained and commanded by these Souls, and not the Souls by the Virtues? The Virtues are made to serve these Souls who are made to obey God and to receive the unique gifts of pure courtesy in his divine nobility. God will not give these gifts to any creature who dwells in desire and volition. Anyone wanting these gifts must neither desire nor want, for otherwise he will not attain them.

And how could Holy Church know all these queens, daughters, sisters, and wives of kings? It wouldn't be possible for Holy Church to know them perfectly unless Holy Church was in their souls. No created thing enters into their souls save God alone, who created them. None save God, who is within them, knows these Souls.

Chapter 20. Love answers Reason regarding her saying that no one except God knows such Souls

(Reason): Now Love, if you would be so kind, for another question comes to mind, and if you do not tell me I will be surprised...

(Love): So be it. What is your question?

(Reason): I will ask you. This book says that no one except God, who is within these Souls, knows them. Yet it said earlier that no one can find or know them, except him or her who pursues Fine Love. But whoever finds these Souls could tell the truth about them, according to this book.[1] Thus it seems that those who are such find others who are or were similar to them.

(Love): It is true, for those who are or were similar to them would know their companions by their practices,[2] but even more so by virtue of the gift given them, which is unique.

(Reason): Unique? Without fail it is unique, for to hear you tell of it I marvel uniquely.

(Love): Reason, one word can have two meanings. Indeed, those who are such know the practices of these Souls, and they know that it is the most

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perfect state that God gives to a creature. However they don't know the dignity of such Souls: this is known only by God, their creator.

Chapter 21. Love responds to Reason's argument concerning what this book says about the Souls taking leave of the Virtues

(Reason) O Love, I have yet another question, for this book says that this Soul takes leave of the Virtues in all her deeds,[1] and you say that the Virtues are always more perfectly with these Souls than with any others.[2] These are two contrary sayings, it seems to me. I don't understand them.

(Love): I will satisfy you. It is true that this Soul has taken leave of the Virtues, as for her use of them and for the desires they require of her, but the Virtues don't take leave of her, for they are always with her, and in perfect obedience to her. By this understanding the Soul takes leave of them and yet they are always with her.

If a man serves a master, he belongs to the one he serves, but his master does not belong to him. This servant, gaining much with his master, learns that he is richer and wiser than his master. Then this servant leaves this master to find a better one. When the first master sees for certain that his valet is worth more than he, he stays with him, obeying him in everything. In the same way you can and must consider the Virtues and such Souls. For at the beginning this Soul, whatever the cost to body and soul, did whatever Reason, her master, taught her. Reason always told her to do what the Virtues wanted, without objection and unto death. While Reason and the other Virtues were her mistresses, this Soul was truly obedient in everything they would command, because she wanted to live a spiritual life. Yet by gaining and learning so much with the Virtues, she is above them, now she has everything the Virtues can teach, and even more, beyond comparison. For this Soul has within her the Master of the Virtues, Divine Love by name, who has totally changed her and has united with her; so this Soul doesn't belong either to herself or to the Virtues.

(Reason): To whom, then?

(Love): To my will. To me, who changed her into myself.

(Reason): And who are you, Love? Aren't you a Virtue like us, though superior to us?

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(Love): I am God, for Love is God and God is Love.[3] This Soul is God by the condition of Love, and I am God by divine nature, and this Soul is God by right of love. This is why this precious beloved of mine is taught and brought by me, without herself, for she is changed in me, to the end that she feeds from my nourishment.

Chapter 22. How this Soul is like an eagle and how she takes leave of Nature

(Love): See now how the Soul is compared to an eagle. For this reason the Soul flies higher and higher, even higher than the other birds, for she is feathered with Fine Love. She sees more clearly the beauty of the sun and its rays, and the splendor of the sun and its rays which provide pasture in the marrow of the high cedar.[1]

(Soul, to wretched Nature who for many days kept her in bondage): Lady Nature, I take leave of you. Love is near to me. I am free because of her, before you all, without fear.[2]

(Love): This Soul is not terrified by tribulation, or detained by consolation, or afflicted by temptation, or lessened by any subtraction. She is available to all by the generosity of pure charity,[3] and she asks nothing of anyone because of the noble courtesy of pure goodness with which God has filled her.[4] She is serious without sadness and joyful without dissipation, for God has blessed his name in her and the Trinity has made her its home.

And you little ones, who take the prey of your pasture from volition and desire: desire that you be such, for whoever desires "the least" and not "the most" is not worthy to receive the least of God's gifts. By the cowardice of his faint heart he has fallen, and is constantly hungry.

Chapter 23. How this Soul has two pillars[1] and is drunk on what she never drank

(Love): This Freed Soul leans on two pillars, one to the right and one to the left. From these two supports the Soul stands firm against her

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enemies, like an impregnable castle with a moat, surrounded by the sea. One of these supports holds the Soul firmly against her enemies and guards the gifts of her wealth. This pillar is the true knowledge of her own poverty. She leans at all times on the left pillar, which is power. The one on the right is the higher knowledge the Soul receives from the pure Godhead. On these two supports she leans, not fearing her enemies to the right or to the left, for she is so astounded by the knowledge of her poverty that she appears to the world and to herself as totally dumbfounded. Yet she is so inebriated with the knowledge of Love and with the grace of pure Godhead, that she is constantly high, being known and filled with Divine Love. She is not inebriated so much from what she has drunk, but she is very drunk, even more drunk from what she hasn't drunk, and what she will never drink.

(Reason): Oh for God's sake, Love! Explain how this Soul is drunk from what she has never drunk, or will ever drink. It seems from your words that it is a far better thing for this Soul to be inebriated from what her beloved drank, drinks, and will drink of the holy cup of his own goodness, than if she had drunk and will drink straight from the barrel's holy tap.

(Love): That's right. The "most" makes her intoxicated, though not from something she has drunk, as explained above. Since her beloved has drunk, she has drunk too.[2] In their shared love there is no difference between their natures. Love, by right, accomplishes this change in her, inebriating her with "the most" from her cup, and it will never be otherwise. There may be several taps to a barrel, but the clearest wine, the newest, the most profitable, and the most delectable, and the most inebriating is the wine that comes from the highest tap. This is the ultimate drink, which only the Trinity drinks. And the Soul is intoxicated without even having drunk of it, and the Annihilated Soul, the Freed Soul, and the Forgotten Soul are also inebriated—very high, even higher from what they haven't drunk and will never drink.

Now take heed and understand a greater declaration: This barrel, filed with its godly beverage assuredly has several taps. This is known by those people who are joined to the person of God the Son, who, after the Trinity, drinks from the most noble tap. Then the Virgin Mary drinks from the next tap, and this noble lady is inebriated from the most high. After her the blazing Seraphim drink, on whose wings the Freed Souls fly.

(Holy Church): My God! What pure love and refinement it must take to keep such a soaring Soul![3]

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(Love): Such a Soul, through humility of mind, intelligence, and will, is an abyss, and is very perceptive and subtle in her knowledge, and she is in every way free, by her love of the Godhead.

Chapter 24. When these Souls are in Pure Love's perfect freedom[1]

(Reason): Love, when are such Souls in Pure Love's perfect freedom?

(Love): When they no longer feel, desire, or expect any affection for such actions would enslave them, and those who do so are too far from the peace of freedom, where few choose to stay. Therefore they do nothing to detract from their innermost peace, and they remain in the peace ordained by Love. Such people are so filled with the divine sun within them, they need not beg elsewhere. Their hearts are kept pure by this sun. They alone have the knowledge of the "most," and without this knowledge they would beg for "the least," but they wouldn't be satisfied.

Such souls are alone in all things and hold all in common, for their souls are not enslaved by acquisitions. Just as the sun, which with God's clarity shines on all things without taking on their impurity, so also these Souls have their being from God and in God, without assuming any impurity from things they see or hear around them.[2]

Chapter 25. Reason asks Love if such Souls experience any inner joy

(Reason): Now explain, Love: do such Souls experience any joy within or outside themselves?

(Love): No, not in the way you mean. For their nature is mortified and their spirits are dead. And their own will having departed, they live in and dwell in divine will through their mortification.

Now take heed, Reason, to better understand your question. You are not cold when your are burning and you're not thirsty when you are drowning. Yet this Soul has been burning so long in the furnace of Love's fire that she has virtually become fire, so she doesn't feel the fire, because she herself is fire by virtue of Love, who has transformed her into Love's fire.[1] This fire burns constantly and completely within her without

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taking or wanting to consume any material thing outside of herself. Yet one who perceives God through the things he sees and hears around him, or by the work he does in God's name does not have fire, for there is matter with such a fire. For a man's work and his desire to accumulate things to help him grow in God's love are nothing but blindness to the knowledge of God's goodness. Yet the one who burns with the fire without seeking, having, or wanting material things sees all things clearly and takes things as they should be taken. For such a Soul has no matter within her which might prevent her from seeing clearly, since she is alone in him by virtue of true humility. She is in full communion with others by the generosity of perfect Charity, and alone in God through Fine Love's holy intention.

Chapter 26. How this Soul loves nothing outside of God's love

(Love): This soul no longer loves anything outside of God's love, nor will she love anything, however noble it be, except for God's sake and according to his will. She loves God in all things and loves all things for his love's sake, and by such love she is alone in the pure love of God's love. So pure is her knowledge that she sees herself as nothing in God and God as nothing in her.

Now, noble lovers, understand the rest through Love's meditation, not through human hearing. When the Soul meditates on Love, she wants none of those gifts which are called consolations, which comfort the Soul by feeling sweetness in prayer. Such feelings and usages don't teach the Soul. Only Pure Love does, for whoever seeks the comfort of God through feelings of consolation thwarts the intention of Fine Love.

Chapter 27. How Meditation of Pure Love has only one expectation

(Love): Meditation of Pure Love has only one expectation: to always love loyally without wishing any reward. The Soul cannot do this without her, for Loyal Love would not deign to accept any consolation which came with her acquisition. No, not at all. Meditation of Love knows for the best that she must not admit anything outside of her own work, which is to

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perfectly want the will of God. She lets God work and conform her will. For anyone wanting God to do her will and to feel His comforts is not perfectly trusting in his goodness alone, but rather in the gifts and riches he has to offer.

(Soul): Of course. Anyone who loves well would not remember to take or to demand, for they would rather prefer to be giving, keeping nothing, in order to love loyally, for she has a single intention, not a double one. Loyal Love has only one aim: to be able to love loyally, for in her Beloved's love there is no doubt that he would not do the best. She does as she must, wanting nothing other than that God's will be done in her.

(Love): She is right, and that is all there is to it! In her own power she can will nothing, for her will is neither hers nor is it within her. It is rather in the One who loves her. It is not in her work, but rather in the work of the whole Trinity, who works in such a Soul by her will.

Chapter 28. How this Soul swims in the sea of joy

(Love): Such a Soul swims in the sea of joy, in the delightful ebb and flow of the sea of the Godhead. But she does not feel joy since she is one with joy, and she swims and flows in joy, feeling no joy, for she dwells in Joy and Joy dwells in her. She is one with Joy by virtue of Joy, who has transformed her.

There is one common will, like fire and flame, like the will of the lover and the loved one; for Love has changed this Soul into herself.

(Soul): O sweet and purest divine Love! How sweet it is that I am changed into the thing which I love better than myself! I am so changed I have lost my identity by loving. Even though I love weakly, it is only through Love that I can love.

Chapter 29. Reason asks Love when this Soul is in Love's pure freedom

(Reason): Now Lady Love, I beg you to explain what you mean when you said that this Soul's existence is in the complete liberty of Pure Love, when she does nothing to detract from her innermost peace.

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(Love): This I will tell you. No matter what happens she does nothing contrary to her spirit's perfect peace. As such, she is truly innocent and the state of which we speak is innocence itself.

Reason, I'll give you an example. Look at a perfectly innocent child. Does he do anything or let anything be done to him, either big or small, if it doesn't please him?

(Reason): Of course not, Love. This I can clearly perceive, and by this I am satisfied with your response to my question.

Chapter 30. How Reason tells Love that she expects this Soul to tell all she can say or speak of about God

(Reason): O Lady Love, forgive me for asking you to satisfy this soul by telling everything that can be said to her by the One who is all in all things.

(Love): This she knows, for she always finds him in all things, for it is fitting to find something where it is, and because he is everywhere, this Soul finds him everywhere. All things are fitting to him and there is nothing in any place where she does not find God. Now Reason, why do you want me to satisfy this Soul by telling everything that can be said about God?

(Reason): So she can rest peacefully in her innocent state without having to move or shift to hear you speak.

(Love to Reason): I'll tell you gladly. I guarantee you, and trust me that all this Soul has heard, or all that could be said about God is like nothing compared to what he is, which never has been spoken, nor will ever be said, or that ever was said, and whatever could be said.

(Love speaks to the Soul to increase her joy and her sorrow and to satisfy all her endeavors): Lady Soul, I'll tell you once and for all, so you won't have to ask me again, for that would be a wasted effort: all creatures, without exception, who now dwell, or will ever dwell in the vision of the sweet countenance of your spouse, have understood and will understand less in what they know, love and praise of his worthiness, which he alone knows, than can be truthfully said of anything ever known, loved or praised.

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(Soul): O Love, what then shall I do? I am more certain than ever of what you have just said. But there is one thing, Lady Love, that I would like to tell you, if I may.

(Love): Sweet Soul, say what you would like, for I'll gladly listen.

(The Amazed Soul): O sweet Love, for God's sake tell me why God was so careful to create, redeem and recreate me only to give me so little, while he has so much to give? Scarcely do I dare speak of what he would do. Truly, I don't know, but if I, even having so little, were the giver, I wouldn't give him so small a portion, and he has everything! I could certainly not keep anything from him; I would give him everything if I were the giver. What little I have of value, I would not retain--not body, heart or soul--and he knows this well. Now that I have given him everything, I have nothing to give, but I would gladly offer him everything if I had anything to give! But he has taken whatever I had of value, has kept it and has given me nothing. For God's Sake, Love, is this how love works?

(Love): O sweet Soul, you know better than to talk like that. If you have given him everything, it's the best thing that could happen to you! Haven't you given him things which were his to begin with, before you even gave them to him. Look, just what then, have you done for him?

(Soul): You are right, sweet Love. I can neither affirm, nor can I deny it.

Chapter 31. How Love comforts the Soul for having given her spouse everything she had

(Love): O sweetest Soul, what would you have him give you? Are you not a creature? Would you have him give you things which are neither his to give or yours to take? Calm down, sweet Soul and believe me. For he doesn't give a creature anything other than what you have; gifts which are rightfully yours.

(Soul): O Lady Love, you didn't tell me this when I first met you. For you told me that in a relationship between a lover and her beloved there is no master. But that is as much as I can say, since one has everything and the other nothing, by comparison. But if I could, I would change it, and if I could, I would love you for all your worth.

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(Love): O sweet Soul, what more can you say? Calm down. Your will is sufficient for your Beloved. And he sends me to tell you to trust him, and to tell you that he will love nothing but you if you love nothing but him. This is a very great privilege. This is sufficient for you, sweet Soul, if you believe me.

(Soul): O sweet Love, for God's sake, speak no more of this, for I could certainly not be still to save the world if it were necessary to save the world through this. For the thing which is most precious to me is what suffices me. If what I love were not sufficient for me, I would weaken and fail in what little love I have. But nevertheless, Lady Love, one thing suffices me. I tell you, it's the One I love more than myself. I love nothing other than he who has what you told me no one else knows of, except him. And therefore, since I love him more than myself, that is the sum of all goodness: my Lord, my God and my All--he is all my consolation. And thus, if I am uneasy with what I lack, I am nevertheless comforted in that he lacks nothing. For in him is the abundance of goodness without fail, and this is the source of my peace and the true repose of my thought, loving nothing but him. Thus, in loving him I lack nothing, as I said earlier. Indeed, it is well understood that I wanted to talk about him, yet no one told me what I would have gladly heard. Lady Love told me the truth, and I am comforted. Yet the best that can be said to me is nothing compared to what he is. And I need not hear more of him, except to say that my Beloved is incomprehensible. And it is true, for one couldn't even fathom the smallest thing to which he is comparable, for my Beloved, as great as he is, has no end to his love, being constantly renewed in the love by God who is complete love.

That is all that can be said to me. Nothing, except what Love has said, could have comforted me. Thus I tell everyone that I have the sum of all my questions in what cannot be said; and such is the Beloved of my soul.

Chapter 32. How Love keeps such Souls sane

(Discernment):[1] By God, it is amazing that these souls can keep their sanity!

(Soul): How well I know! It is Love who keeps them. She is the

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mistress and it's up to her that this work be done. I said earlier that I need nothing, since my Beloved has enough in his own noble righteousness, which is without beginning and without end. What could I need? I love neither myself, nor him, nor his work except for his own sake. What he has --which I don't have or will ever have--is better mine than what I have or will have in my possession through him.

(Reason): Prove it!

(Soul): This is easy to prove, and here is the proof: I love one of the abundant things which are in him one hundred thousand times more than all the gifts which he could ever offer me. So I love what is in him, beyond my understanding, more than what is in him within my understanding. For this reason, he knows that what I don't know is better mine that what I know on my own. My treasure is found where I have put all my love. Because I love the unknown " most" in him more than I love "the least" which I do know, my portion is better mine because of "the most" of my love, as Love witnesses. This, in the end, gives my spirit peace.

But still I would like to add, Lady Love, that if another of his creatures had enough power and will to give me the same joy and glory which those of his court receive--if it didn't come directly from him--I would be absolutely refuse it rather than receive it from anyone other than himself. No, better to die forever. But that would be impossible, for he has so possessed me that I can will nothing apart from him.

Sweet Love, for God's sake, be patient with me, for I am completely overwhelmed by him, and I don't know what to request. What should I ask of him? This I truly know: that no more than count the waves on the sea during a storm, could we describe or tell of spiritual understandings, knowing as little as we do about God. It's not surprising, for the flesh is too gross to speak of matters of the spirit. But they say that something is better than nothing; likewise I tell you, that it is better to hear what is said, than to hear nothing at all.

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Chapter 33. The Soul is overwhelmed when she considers the gifts of God's goodness

(Soul): O Lord, how can I stay in my right mind when I think of your bounteous gift to my Soul in the vision of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, which remains in my Soul forever. The great things I've seen then, like the Trinity, the knowledge of angels, souls and saints, will never be taken from me, any more than the vision of small things, the lesser things of God!

O Lord, what have you done to me? For truly, Lord, I am completely overwhelmed by what I know, that I cannot express my wonder, and I have no experience, nor could I have had it in the pursuit of this knowledge. Lord, if I had no other occasion to marvel than in the vision[1] you gave my Soul of the Trinity, of the angels and the souls—which you didn't give to your precious flesh, who is joined to the nature of the Father in the person of the Son—it would be a marvel that I could live through it! But yet, Lord, it is such a great thing to see the angels and the souls to whom you have shown the vision of your sweet face; those angels and souls which no one is worthy to see. Furthermore, no one in the flesh can see the Trinity, since one cannote see the angels and the souls. Yet nevertheless, you have given this gift to my spirit for evermore, as long as you shall be God!

Chapter 34. How the Soul says that by herself, she can do nothing

(Soul) For God's sake, Love, I beg you to tell me what I should do, now that I know this and have the gifts of my Beloved's goodness?

(Love): I will tell you, but beyond this don't ask me more. And the best I can say is that if you know perfectly your nothingness, you will do nothing, and this nothingness will give you everything. If you cannot perfectly recognize your nothingness, which is what you really are, you will then have to do something, indeed the best that you are capable of, or what you have conceived in your spirit will destroy you. If God has transformed you in himself, you must not forget your nothingness. This means that you must not forget who you were when he first created you, and what you would be if he hadn't watched over your works, and who you were and would be if he did not dwell in you.

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(Soul): O Lord, I am sure that I have no worth other than my horrible failings, and because of these failings you suffered death to give me life. But above all, Lord, my hope and expectation is truly this: if no one except I alone had sinned, you would have redeemed my soul, which turned from your love, by dying naked on the cross for me, with your ordained power to destroy sin.

Therefore Lord, all that you suffered, in your sweet humanity, you suffered for me, as if no one else had ever sinned, except I alone. For this Lord, I alone am in your debt. Yet I owe you even more: for apart from this I am worth nothing, and am in your debt, for your worth is greater than mine, for whom you gave yourself. And yet you know, Lord, that I can do nothing, when I am so indebted to you. But I beg you, sweet and courteous friend, to please forgive me this debt, you who have the power to do anything. And without fail Lord, it will be done, providing that from now on I pray that your perfect will be done.

Chapter 35. How Soul argues with Reason saying that God has loved her with no beginning

(Soul): O sweet Love, please show me how my work is that of the Trinity.

(Love): Speak your mind, for you must not keep it from me.

(Soul): Lady Love, I will tell you. You have said that God, who is in himself and of himself with no beginning, will never love anything apart from me, nor I anything other than him.

(Love): It's true, I guarantee it.

(Soul): So, since he will never--meaning without an end--love anything outside of me, it follows that he never loved anything apart from me. So he will be with me, through Love, without an end. Therefore, I have been loved by him without a beginning.

(Reason): Watch what you say, Lady Soul! Have you forgotten that you are newly created and before that you were nothing? For God's sake, sweet Soul, beware of falling into error.

(Soul): If I err in holding this opinion, Lady Reason, Love errs with me, who causes me believe, think and say this.

(Reason): Then, Lady Soul, prove what you say!

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(Soul): O Reason, how tedious you are! And what pain and sorrow you cause those who heed your advice! Reason, if I am loved endlessly by the three persons of the Trinity, I have also been loved by them without a beginning. As God, in his goodness, will love me without end, in the same way, I have been created through the work of his divine providence, in his wisdom and knowledge. Hence, since I have been in divine knowledge from the beginning, when God was, who is without beginning, I will be there without end. Thus from the start, God, in his goodness, has loved the work he would do in me through his divine power.

(Love): It's true. Since then, he has not wanted to withhold love from you any more than he does now.

(Soul): So now Reason, you have heard Love testify. From now on be still and don't meddle with me.

(Reason): Yes, Lady Soul. Since Love governs you and you don't govern Love, and since Love dwells in you, making her will in you, without you, I would not dare meddle or interfere with you. Indeed, Lady Soul, from now on I promise you obedience and peace with all my might. In fact I am forced to do so, since Love wills it, and I cannot go against her. Rather I submit to you completely.

Chapter 36. How Soul is free and beyond Reason's subjection

(Soul to Reason): The tables are really turned now, and rightly so, for the nobility and courtesy of my spouse would no longer deign to leave me in your bondage or in anyone else's. Thus it is fitting that the husband liberate his spouse, whom he willingly took.

(Love): It's true, sweet Soul. This freedom I grant and ordain to you.

(Reason): For God's sake, Lady Soul, think, say, and do what you want since Love wishes and grants it!

(Soul): Reason, how crude you are! Love wants me to say, think and do anything I want; and why wouldn't I? It is his own doing, for on my own I can do nothing unless my Beloved does it in me. Are you astonished that he wants what I want? Anyway, it behoves him to want it, for I don't will alone, without his willing in me. He wills what I will, and he wills

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nothing I don't will. In this, Reason, I have peace, and my Beloved and I are in compliance.

(to God): O kind Master of this work, how can I deserve such peace, I, who have known such loss in my work? And without fail, Lord, I have it, for your courtesy and your nobility grant me peace as you have peace. Lord, I am so well aware of this debt which you have acquitted--this peace you have granted me--that whatever happened, happens, or will come to pass because of my sins, your peace will always be with me.[1]

Chapter 37. Here the Soul says that in Heaven her sins will be known to her great glory

(Soul): Lord, my sins, ugly and hideous as they are, are known to no one in this world except you. But Lord, all those in Heaven will ascribe them not to my shame, but to my greater glory. Seeing how I have offended you by my sins, Lord, they will know of your great mercy and of your generous courtesy.

(Love): This courtesy gives the Soul peace of conscience, whether doing or failing in your will, for perfect charity consists of perfectly willing your will. And whoever wills with perfect charity could never have remorse or a prick of conscience. In the Soul, remorse or troubled conscience is nothing but a lack of charity, and the Soul is created for no other reason than to dwell constantly in the state of pure charity.

(Soul): O Lord, did I say that of you?

(Love): Think about it, and you will understand these words.

(Soul): It is you, Lady Love who gives me knowledge. Let me repeat: Such is the working of nothingness: nothing should be nothing. Therefore, I am sure that what I said is less than nothing. But my portion of divine knowledge, as you yourself have said, in or through me, Lady Love, derives from your goodness for my own profit and for others. And it is to your glory and to our profit if it is shared with the listeners who will read this book.

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Chapter 38. How the Soul recognizes Love's courtesy in perfectly recognizing her poverty

(Soul to Love): O drifting and abandoned Beloved who is courteous beyond measure for me! I perceive you as drifting and abandoned when you are suffering. Suffering Lord? But still you suffer more and even more gladly than ever that I stay endlessly in my desert--in this ugly body. I cannot, however, for the sake of your mercy, recover the loss of time past, for it behooves you to keep your righteousness. Furthermore, I cannot regain the lost time or be so far removed that I wouldn't love, know and praise you.

Oh the hours spent in laziness! Oh the error into which I have fallen! I, who am the abyss of total poverty! And yet, in such an abyss of poverty you wish to place, if I can contain it, the gift of grace you spoke of above. Spoke of? Truly, Lady Love, what you have said of this grace would be but chatter from the mouth of a creature, compared to your work.

(Reason): For God's sake, Lady Love, surely I have heard your words more willingly than ever, and I understand perfectly. But Love, is it true that you are the only one to receive this gift?

(Love): Indeed, and from the person of the Holy Spirit himself.

(Reason): Then I suppose I don't understand, yet it seems that everything this Soul has done, which is from you, is well-done indeed.

Chapter 39. How Reason wants to serve this Soul as a slave

(Reason) Now, Lady Love, please lead me so I can completely serve her as a slave, for I know that there is no greater joy, no greater honor than being this Soul's servant.

(Love): I must confess that you could do no better than confess and say this.

(Reason): But gentle Love, what will I do with the others I must govern who will no longer see in this Soul the outward signs of my governance?

(Love): Why do you say that? What better governance could a Soul have?

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(Reason) None, not for those who are beginning to see the light, or for those who are chosen, but there are very few who are so chosen. That I have heard.

(Love): Now Reason, what do you mean by "governance"?[1]

(Reason): By "governance," I mean a life of constant virtue, following my counsel and that of Discernment, in the example of the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Love): Reason, what the humanity of Jesus Christ suffered, was not experienced in his deity. Likewise I say from the example of what happened to the Soul, that what you say about the Virtues and yourself doesn't concern her. She can do much better, for Love dwells in her and has transformed her into Love herself. This Soul herself is Love, and there is no discernment in Love. Discernment is needed in all things except Love. I'll give you an example. A lord expects rent from his land from those who rightfully owe it. However, the lord does not owe rent to his serfs. The serfs owe it to their lord. In the same way, Reason, all things owe me tribute when they proceed from the works of the Virtues under Reason's counsel and are completed in Discernement. All owe with the exception of the Soul overtaken by and changed in Love. She owes me only love, since she is absolved and Love has absolved her.

Chapter 40. How Love calls this Soul supremely wise and why

(Love): Among my elect I call this Soul supremely wise, but a small mind cannot esteem such a worthy or valuable thing.

(Reason): O Lady Love, what do you mean by wise?

(Love): The abyss of humility.

(Reason): What is the abyss of humility?

(Love): When a person is never wrong about anything, knowing he is never right in anything. Having this knowledge of his wrong, he sees it so clearly that he considers himself beneath all others in a sea of sin. Since her enemies are servants of sin, this Soul has long since seen that she is beneath them--without comparing herself to them, rather through herself and her works--and in this regard this Soul has become nothing and less than nothing in all respects. Through the Holy Spirit, she has long known that

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God will place the least in the highest places[1] through his unique and loyal goodness.

Chapter 41. How the Soul has no grief from sin, nor hope from the good she ever does

(Love): Because this Soul does not grieve from the sins she has committed, she derives no hope from what she might do, except in God's goodness. The secret treasure of this unique abundance has so nullified her within, that she is dead to all feelings within and without, so this Soul no longer performs works either for God or for herself, for such practices have lost meaning for her. She cannot seek or find God, or even guide herself.[1]

This soul is not with herself, and so she must be excused from everything. The One in whom she is does his work through her. In this way she is free, as God bears witness, who is the author of this work for her benefit, for there is no work in this Soul.

(Fear): O Love, if she is not with herself, where is she?

(Love): Where she loves, without knowing it, and so this Soul lives with an untroubled conscience, because she does nothing from within herself. Whoever acts according to his conscience is nothing without it, and is guided by Nature and Reason. But one who is dying from Love neither feels nor recognizes Reason or Nature. Even if given the choice, such a Soul neither desires the joys of Heaven, nor would she refuse the torments of Hell, since that would fully depend on her will.[2]

(Holy Church): What is God's name does she want then?

(Love): What she is through knowing.

(Holy Church): And what is such a Soul? O sweet Holy Spirit, tell us, for this word is beyond our writings, and we cannot understand it through Reason. And she has so overwhelmed us, that we dare not argue with her.

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Chapter 42. How the Holy Spirit teaches what the Soul knows and wishes she had

(Holy Spirit to Holy Church): O Holy Church, do you wish to know what the Soul knows and wants? I will tell you. This Soul knows only one thing—meaning that she knows nothing. And she wants only one thing, and that is nothing. And this lack of knowledge, this lack of will give her everything, enabling her to find the secret and hidden treasure eternally contained in the Holy Trinity. And this, not by divine nature, for it could not be so, but by the power of Love as it should be.

(Love): Now, Holy Church, you have heard why this Soul has everything.

(The Holy Spirit): Indeed, including all that I have from the Father and the Son. And since she has all that I have, the Father and the Son have nothing which is not within me; therefore this Soul has hidden and contained within her the treasure of the Holy Spirit.[1]

(Holy Church): Therefore, since it is so, it is fitting that the Trinity lives and dwells in her.

(The Holy Spirit): That is right, since she is dead to the world and the world to her, the Trinity will always dwell in her.

Chapter 43. How such Souls are called Holy Church, and what the Holy Church can say about them

(Holy Church): O true God, Holy Spirit!

(Love): Holy Church indeed, you are beneath this Holy Church![1] For such Souls are more properly called Holy Church, since they sustain, teach and nourish the whole church. And they are not alone, but the whole Trinity with them, and this is true, without any doubt.

O Holy Church, beneath His Holy Church, tell us now what you would like to say about those Souls who are ordained and praised above you, you, who follow the advice of Reason in all things?

(The Little Holy Church): We would like to say that such Souls have a life above ours since Love dwells in them and Reason dwells in us. But this does not detract from us. Rather we commend and praise them for that, as we are told in the gloss of our scriptures.[2]

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(Reason): But please, Lady Love, we wanted to understand more clearly about the bountiful gift the Holy Spirit gives to such Souls, lest no one be hampered through coarseness in hearing this Godly lesson.

(Love): O Reason, you will always be one-eyed,[3] you and all those who are fed by your doctrine. For one who sees things right before his eyes and knows nothing is truly one-eyed. That's how it is with you.

(The Holy Spirit): If I have said that I will give this Soul everything I have, I will give it. But rather the whole Trinity has already promised, and in our goodness and knowledge, grant everything we have through eternal foreknowledge. And we should keep nothing we possess from such Souls. For this Soul has given us everything she had of value. In a manner of speaking, she has given us what we already have, for it is truly said that good a will makes for good deeds. And this Soul is in such a condition, that if she possessed what we have, she would give it to us, even though we already had it[4], without wanting any earthly or heavenly reward, but only to do our will. Now what we have derives from our proper divine condition, yet this Soul gives it to us through guise of her will, enclosed by Love without guise. Because this Soul has given us everything she possesses, and everything that is and that she doesn't have through guise of will, we must give her what we have, through Love's justice. Thus we have what we possess through divine nature, and this Soul receives from us through Love's justice.

(The Little Holy Church): O Lord, we understand and truly believe that this gift from your worthy nobility is Love's reward, for Love can in no way be adequately rewarded except by Love.

(Love): This Soul perceives that moderation is the greatest spirit, sufficiency the greatest wealth, and Love the greatest force. Her memory, understanding, and will are focused completely on one being, on God, from whose Being she has her being, without knowing, feeling or wanting any state except by God's command. This Soul has long languished in Love.

Chapter 44. How the Soul languishes in Love, and how this Soul is dying from Love

(Reason): O Lady Love, what does a Soul languishing in love do?

(Love): She fights vice by acquiring virtue.

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(Soul): Yes, sweet Love, and what a mighty and perilous war it is! For certainly you are right to call it a life of languish and war.

(Love): She has so languished in Love that she is dying from Love.

(Reason): O Love, for God's sake, how is this Soul is dying from Love?

(Love): She has bid farewell to the world, and the world has taken leave and has bid her farewell. Dwelling in God, she no longer encounters vice or sin. She is so restored and hidden in God that the world, the flesh, and her enemies cannot harm her, for she is not found in their deeds. And thus, such a Soul lives in rest and peace, for created things don't concern her. Because she has such peace, she lives in the world with an untroubled conscience.

(Reason): So, such a Soul has no will, and this state should also be our state of being. We will have no greater merit with God until we permit our will to be his will, by completely giving up our will, desiring nothing but the full measure of his work, befitting his goodness.

(Soul): I agree, and I lack nothing since I want nothing. No soul can have perfect peace unless she has no will.

(Love): How do you know, Lady Soul?

(Soul): Certainly, I know, Lady Love, for I have proven it through rigorous testing, and so much so that I almost died there. And I would have died if the divine non-will hadn't removed me at the bidding of divine goodness. One who wants nothing, has no will. And he alone has surrendered his will, because he has nothing to will except the will of the One to whom he has given it.

Chapter 45. How those who have no will live in freedom of charity

(Love): These people live in the freedom of charity, which is without will, and if someone were to ask them what they wanted, they would truly say that they wanted nothing. These people have come to know their nothingness regarding things within them. They can know nothing of their nothingness, for they have little knowledge of such a loss. They have come to believe in "the most,"[1] and the substance of such belief consists of what cannot be known.

(Reason): Nothing?

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(Love): Nothing, not even if one knew all that is known in Heaven. And even if one were to compare him to other things that can only be understood partially, still all that would be considered as nothing. Even this comparison would be nothing compared to him, if one could add to this comparison his power, his mind, his knowledge and his goodness; but even that would only be a glimmer of his pure goodness, and still it would be nothing. Whoever would know all this about him, which is beyond human understanding, would still know nothing compared to the smallest particle within him, known only by him. Now, to clarify this meaning: If a person knew all that is said of God, it would still be nothing compared to the great knowledge which resides in him, beyond our knowledge. Indeed, even the tiniest part of his goodness, comparatively speaking, would still be nothing considering the greatness of the smallest part of his goodness, and even less than a speck with regard to his eternity.

(Soul): O Lord God, believing this, what will the Soul do?

(God): She will do nothing, for I work in her without her help. Knowing her nothingness and believing in me have so reduced her that she can do nothing. Recognizing this nothingness beside the greatness of this "all" has completely excused and freed her, for she lacks nothing since she wants nothing.

Chapter 46. How the Soul knows "the most" since in her opinion, she knows nothing of God with respect to his "most"

(Love): Now this Soul has fallen and has come to an understanding of the "most," knowing nothing of God compared to his "all."

(Reason): Oh my, do I dare call it "nothing" when it is from God?

(Soul): Oh my, yes. And why not? Whatever he might bestow is is not really nothing, but taking all that he gives us which is described above in comparison to the smallest glimmer of his goodness, it would really be nothing, for his goodness resides in his knowledge which is beyond our comprehension.

(Soul): Oh, Oh! If only I could have all of him since they say such good things about the "least" of him. My sweet Beloved, you alone know this and that's enough for me!

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Chapter 47. How the Soul has come to know her nothingness

(Love): Now you know how this Soul has come to believe in the "most." Next I will tell you how she has come to understand her nothingness: It is in what she knows, and neither she nor the others know anything of her horrible sins and failings compared to what God knows. Such a Soul, having kept no will of her own, has therefore succumbed and now desires nothing. Her certain knowledge of non-knowing and of non-wanting has excused and freed her. Such a Soul follows the advice of the Gospel which says: "Keep your eye clear, and therefore do not sin."[1]

So this Soul is peaceful in all that God suffers for her, for she has true understanding in all her intentions, and peaceful rest in the deeds of her neighbors. She doesn't judge things that do not concern her, except for the good. This Soul finds peace everywhere, for she always carries it with her. All places and all things seem to her to befit such peace.

So she is seated without moving from the throne of peace, which in the Book of Life[2] witnesses to her good conscience in the freedom of perfect charity.

Chapter 48. How a Soul is not free who desires that God's will be done in her to her glory

(Love): Being free, this Soul wants nothing, yet a person who has any inner desires of any kind is not free. For as such, he is a slave to himself, since he wants God's will to be done to his own glory. And in wanting this, he expects God's will accomplished for his sake or for others, and God refuses his kingdom to such people.

(Reason): That is certainly how they are.

(Soul): That is how they are.[1] Truly indeed, for they must be so, or else they would lose what few possessions they have.

(Reason): It's true, Lady Soul. I admit it.

(Love): Such persons are rarely at peace, even though they think they are, for believing this is enough for them.

(Soul): They are not so valuable, yet they think there is no one greater than they, and this prevents them from obtaining the best. So they remain with their good intentions.

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(Love): Such people will never be sufficed.

(Soul): Certainly not. Since they still have a will, they are slaves to their will. They believe everything Reason and Fear tell them, and they are in bondage to these two Virtues with their thunderous will. The only one who is truly liberated is the one who is governed by Faith and Love, who frees her from bondage without fearing anything dreadful or desiring anything pleasurable.

Chapter 49. How the Soul, having no will, is noble

(Love): Having no will of her own, this Soul doesn't worry about what God does, only that his will be done. For this Soul is liberated and content. She doesn't need Hell, Heaven or any created thing. She neither wants nor refuses anything that can be named.

(The Little Holy Church): In God's name then, what does she want?

(Love): Nothing. She wants nothing. But this seems very strange to someone who expects huge dividends of multiple love. And it's no wonder, for surely it wouldn't occur to them to think this would harm them, since it seems so strange to them.

(Soul): Such people are so blind that big things appear to be little.

(Love): What you say, sweet Soul, is true. For in as much as God's work is worth more than human work, it is of far greater worth to want nothing in God than to be well-intentioned for God. Indeed, through good intentions they can perform miracles and become everyday martyrs for the love of God; still there is no comparison, because they still have a will. And they wouldn't change, even if, by willing it, they were caught up daily in heaven with a vision of the Trinity, like St. Paul the Apostle.[1]

Chapter 50. How this Soul is marked by God, as wax from a seal.[1]

(Love): This Soul is marked by God and the unity of love holds God's true imprint. As wax takes the form of a seal this Soul assumes the imprint of the true model.

(Soul): Although God loves us, as he has shown by his divine works and human suffering, yet he wouldn't love us against his will. And in dying for

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us and in taking on human flesh, it was a testimony to his goodness which he owed me according to his will. However, he would not love us against his will. Even if everything created by the knowledge of the Trinity were to be eternally damned, yet Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would not have set aside the truth to save us all.

Woe is me! From whence comes everything I've said? Doesn't everyone know that what I have just said is impossible?

(Love): Yes, sweet love, all my loved ones know very well that this cannot be.

(The person of God the Father): But you are saying it, my dear beloved ones, and it is fitting for my eldest daughter who inherits my kingdom to know about the secrets of the Son through the Holy Spirit's love, which was given to this Soul.

Chapter 51. How this Soul is like the Godhead

(Love): It is proper that this Soul be like the Godhead for she is transformed in God, who maintains her true form which was eternally granted, given by the One who, in his goodness, has loved her from the beginning.

(Soul): O Love, the meaning of what you say reduces me to nothing, and my nothingness has placed me into an abyss beneath nothingness and beyond measure. The knowledge of my nothingness has given me all, and the nothingness of this "all" has taken worship and prayer from my lips, and I do not pray.

(The Little Holy Church): And what do you do then, sweet Lady and Mistress of ours?

(Soul): I rest in complete peace, alone; all and nothing in the courtesy of the unique kindness of God, not moving, not even for the slightest desire for any of his wealth. My work is accomplished in always wanting nothing. For in wanting nothing, I am alone in him, myself excluded, and completely free. When I want something I am with myself and have lost my freedom. But wanting nothing, and having lost all beyond wanting, I need nothing. Freedom sustains me and I want nothing from anyone.

(Love): O precious Esther[1] who has lost all your devotional

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practices, and by this loss you are practiced in doing nothing! You are truly very precious! For truly this practice and this loss[2] have been made nothing by your Beloved, and in this nothingness you are faint and dwelling in death. But you, beloved, are living in the fullness of his will. That is his chamber,[3] and it is pleasing to him.

Chapter 52. How Love praises this Soul, and how she dwells in the abundance and wealth of Divine Love

(Love to this precious pearl[1]]): Oh you, so highly born, you are truly welcome in the one free mansion. No one can enter there if he is not of your lineage, or of illegitimate birth.

(To the hearers): This Soul has entered the abundance and wealth of Divine Love, not through attainment of divine knowledge; for no human understanding, no matter how enlightened, can ever attain the wealth of Divine Love (not through human understanding, but by attainment of her other Love) but this Soul's love is so united to the greater wealth of Divine Love that she is clothed with the adornments of this other peace in which she lives and remains, and is, and was and will be without her being. For as iron is clothed in fire and loses its substance when the hottest fire changes it into fire; so this Soul is clothed with the "most," nourished and transformed into the "most," for the love of the "most," without concern for the "least." She dwells in and is changed into this "most" of surpassing and perpetual peace. And she cannot be found. This Soul lives in the sweet country of surpassing peace, where nothing can help or harm those who love her, neither created beings nor given things, or anything which God might promise.

(Reason): And what is that?

(Love): What has never, is never, or will ever be given, which made her naked and brought her to nothingness, not that things matter to her. She desires nothing: not help, nor hope. Not his power, wisdom, or kindness.

(Soul speaks of her Beloved): He is, and he lacks nothing. I am not, yet I too lack nothing. For he has given me peace and I live by peace which is born of his gifts in my Soul without conscious thought. If I can do

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nothing, then nothing is given me. It is my best. Such a state provides a love, a will and a work in two natures. The annihilation of the unity of divine justice has such power.

(Love, to the hearers): This Soul lets the dead bury their dead[2] and the errant practice virtue and so she rests from "the least" in "the most," but she uses all things. The "most" shows her her nothingness, naked without covering. Nakedness shows her the Almighty through the goodness of divine justice. These visions make her profound, wide, high, and secure, for they will always make her naked, all and nothing, when they have her in their grasp.

Chapter 53. How Reason requests an explanation of what is said above

(Reason): O abyss so sweet! Bottomless pit of perfect humility![1] Noble stone in the expanse of the field of Truth,[2] alone surpassing all save those in your domain, I beg you to tell us the meaning of these obscure words which Fine Love touched upon.

(Soul): Reason, if someone tells you and you hear it, still you would not understand. Your questions have spoiled and made this book contemptible, for there are many who have understood it in far fewer words. Your questions have lengthened it with the answers you require for yourself and for those you feed who go at a snail's pace. You have opened it to those of your kind who go at a snail's pace.

(Love): Opened? Indeed so, to the extent that Reason and her pupils cannot contradict what seems to them well-said, regardless of what they understand.

(Soul) It is true. For Fine Love is the master teacher of anyone who understands on his own. And anyone who wishes to understand perfectly must die the most mortifying death, for no one shall taste of this life unless he dies a complete death.[3]

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Chapter 54. Reason asks in what death a Soul must die, according to this book's understanding

(Reason) O treasure of Love, tell us in what manner of death you should die according to your subtle understanding of this book.[1]

(Soul): Ask Love, for she knows the truth of it.

(Reason): O Lady Love, for God's sake, have mercy! Tell us, not only for myself or for the sake of those I feed, but also for those who have taken leave of me. This book will enlighten them, God willing.

(Love): Reason, those who have taken leave of you will still make use of your nourishment for the two deaths in which this Soul has died to death. But of the third death, in which this Soul has died, no living thing will understand, except those on the Mountain.

(Reason): For God's sake, tell us who are the people of the mountain.

(Love): On earth they have no shame, honor or fear of anything that might happen.

(Reason): Goodness, Lady Love! For God's sake answer our questions, before you say any more, for I fear and dread to hear of the life of this Soul.

Chapter 55. How Love answers Reason's questions

(Love): Reason, those who live by this book--those who have attained such a state of life--understand it quickly without having it explained.[1] But I will explain some of your questions. Now listen:

There are two kinds of people who live a life of perfection: by works of virtue and in affection of the Spirit.[2] First are those who completely mortify the body doing works of charity. They take such great pleasure in their works, that they don't know that there is any better state than that of virtue's deeds and death by martyrdom, They persevere in their meditations and prayers, in multiplying good will in their continuing steadfastness, and that, for them, is the best possible state of life. Such people are happy, but they are perishing in their labors, because of the sufficiency of their existence. Such people are called kings in a land where each of them is one-eyed. And without fail, those who have two eyes keep them as slaves.

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(Soul): For they truly are slaves, but they don't know it. They resemble the owl who thinks there is no more beautiful bird in the wood than her chick! It is the same for those who live in constant desire. For they think there is no better state than the state of desire they live in and in which they prefer to remain. And they perish along the way because of the sense of sufficiency provoked by their desire and will.

Chapter 56. How the Virtues complain to Love, who holds them in such low esteem

(Virtues): Oh God, Alas, Lady Love! Who will bring us honor since you say that those who completely follow our advice are dying? For truly, if anyone had said this to us, we would consider him unorthodox[1] and a bad Christian! For we don't understand how anyone who completely followed our teaching could perish through the burning desire of true emotion which Jesus Christ evokes. Yet, Lady Love, we perfectly believe everything you say without a shadow of doubt.

(Love): Indeed. Understanding is mastery, it is the seed of divine pasture.

(Virtues): We believe it, Love, but it is not in our office to understand it. We are excused by believing you according to the understanding we possess, since you have made us servants of such Souls.

(Soul, to the Virtues): Without doubt, you've said it well, and you ought to be believed! I say this to all who hear this book: Anyone who serves a poor master for a long time can expect a poor income and a small salary. Now the Virtues know this and appreciate it well (let all who have ears, hear!) and they know nothing of Fine Love's state. So I ask, how can the Virtues teach their pupils what they don't have and will never know? Anyone who wants to learn and understand how those who dwell in the Virtues perish, should ask Love.

Indeed, ask Love, who is the mistress of Knowledge, not Love, the daughter of Knowledge, for she knows nothing. But better yet let him ask Love, the mother of Knowledge and of Divine Light, for she knows everything of the "most" of everything in which Soul rests and dwells, and where she is completely at home.

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Chapter 57. Of those who are errant[1] and how they are slaves and merchants

(Love) Now you have heard of those who perish, how and why and for what they die. Next we will tell you about the errant ones, who are slaves and merchants, but they act more wisely than those who perish.

(Soul): O Lady Love, you who by your love do all things easily, tell us why they remain with the Virtues when they are perishing, and why they serve them while burning with desire from the cutting work of the spirit?[2] Those who are perishing feel so as much as the errant, so which state is better? Why praise them more than those who are perishing?

(Love): Which? There are many states. But they are much better off in their than those who are perishing, who are beyond help.

(Soul): O Love of Divine Love, I beg you to tell us why the errant ones are wiser than those who perish, for they follow the same practices, except in the sense in which you value them most.

(Love): Because they aspire to a state which is better than their own, and they are well aware of not knowing this better state which they believe in. But this belief gives them little knowledge and satisfaction, so they consider themselves miserable and displaced. And so they are in comparison to the liberated state of the others who never move. Considering this, and knowing fully well that they are errant, they often, with a burning desire, ask the way of she who knows it, the maiden of Knowledge, who is enlightened by divine grace. This maiden takes pity on them, because of their questions, and those who have been errant know this. She teaches them the straight royal pathway through the land of non-wanting. This is the right way; those who have taken it know I'm telling the truth. And those people who are errant and feel miserable also know it. For if they are errant they can come to the land of the free, of which we spoke, through the teaching of this Divine Light, of whom the small and errant Soul asks the way and direction of her pathway.

(Reason): Small? Indeed, more than small!

(Holy Spirit): Even more so. Indeed, as often and as long as she questions Knowledge and Love, or worries about what might be, concerning love knowledge or praise; for the wise don't pray without good reason, or worry about what might befall them. Thus, it can be said that he who asks

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often is small and poor; indeed even more so is he who asks nothing. For every state, no matter which, is nothing more than a ball game, child's play, compared to the sovereign state of non-willing, where the free soul remains without moving. For anyone who is free in his just state of being would not refuse, nor wish, nor promise anything, no matter what he was offered, but would rather give away everything and remain loyal.

Chapter 58. How these annihilated Souls are in the fifth state with their Beloved.

(Reason): For God's sake, what things could an annihilated Soul have to give?

(Love): To give? Indeed, whatever God has of value. This Soul we speak of isn't errant or perishing. Rather she is elevated to the fifth state with her Beloved. There she lacks nothing and she is often dazzled by the sixth, but that doesn't last long. For it is an opening, like lightning, which quickly closes. One cannot bear it for long, and she never had a mother[1] who could describe this.

The dazzling expansion of light after its opening,[2] gives this Soul, after its closing, peace from her work; so free, so noble and so unencumbered by anything--as long as the peace the opening provided lasts--that if, after such an adventure, she could stay in the fifth state without falling to the fourth, she would remain there. The fourth has volition, and the fifth has none. In the fifth state, of which this book speaks, there is no volition. This is where the Soul stays after the work of Dazzling Far-Near,[3] whom we call "Lightning," from the rapid opening and shutting of the opening. No one could know of the peace upon peace, beyond peace which the Soul receives, unless they had been there themselves.

(To hearers): Hear these words in Godly love, hearers of this book! This Far-Near, whom we call "Lightning," from the manner of opening and shutting, takes Soul from the fifth state and places her in the sixth, as long as his work continues and lasts. There she is in another state, but her stay in the sixth is of short duration, for she is taken back to the fifth. And is it not a marvel, for the action of this flash of light, as long as it lasts, is nothing other than a demonstration of the Soul's glory?

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It never lasts long in any creature, only in the space of its movement. It is a noble gift, for its work is done in the Soul without any appearance or perception by her. But the peace produced by my work, and which remains in the Soul as long as I work, is so delicious that Truth calls it "glorious pasture", and no one can be fed there who dwells in desire. People who have experienced it would govern a land, if there were a need to do so, in total absence.[4]

Chapter 59. What this Soul has lived through, and how and when she became "without" herself

(Love): In the beginning the Soul led a life of grace. Grace is born in the death of sin. After that, she lived the life of the spirit. The life of the spirit is born in the death of nature. Now she lives a holy life. The holy life is born of the death of the spirit.

This Soul, who lives a holy life, is always "without" herself.

(Reason): For God's sake, when is such a Soul without herself?

(Love): When she is in herself.

(Reason): And when is she in herself?

(Love): When she is nowhere in herself, not in God, not in herself, not in her neighbors, but in the annihilation which is the work of Lightning, in his approach to his work, which is especially noble. From one brief, glorious moment of kind Lightening's opening, it nullifies more than you can imagine; it nullifies more than any Soul can say of the precious closing. The annihilation has made her forget[1] the knowledge which annihilation gave her.

(Soul): Goodness! It would be a great lord indeed who could appreciate the benefit of such an annihilation!

(Love): It's true. He would be indeed.

(Soul, to the hearers of this book): If you have heard things of a high nature in these words, don't be upset if I speak now of humbler things, for it is appropriate for me to do so; if I wish to accomplish the purpose of my mission, not only for the beggars, but for those who aren't beggars and for those who will be and will always be, as long as they shall remain in themselves.

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Chapter 60. How it is fitting to die three deaths in order to achieve a free, annihilated life

(Love): Reason, you have asked us how many deaths one should die in order to achieve such a life. And I answer that before the Soul can be born in this life, she must die three separate deaths. The first, as you have heard, is the death to sin, in which the Soul must entirely die to the extent that color, taste, or smell of anything forbidden in God's Law must no longer be a part of her. Those who have died in this way are people who live a life of grace, and this is enough for them. Abstaining from doing what God forbids, they do what God commands.

(To the annihilated Souls): O great and noble annihilated Souls, exalted by admiration and amazement in joint union with Divine Love, forgive me if I touch upon something for the lesser ones, for I will soon be speaking of your state. Notwithstanding, when black and white appear together, one can see the two colors better by contrast than when each appears separately.

(To the daughters of Reason): Now, you who are elected and called to this sovereign state, listen and make haste, for there is a long way and a hard path from the first state of grace to the final state of glory given by kind Far-Near. I have said that you should listen and make haste, because this understanding is difficult, subtle and very noble: qualities which help those of a sanguine disposition.[1] Those of a choleric disposition are helped by the haste of a driven will, burning with spiritual desire. When these two natures are joined together, meaning nature and burning spiritual desire, it is a great advantage, for such people are strongly committed in whatever they undertake, and they are completely joined when they give themselves in spiritual and natural strength. When these two natures blend with the third nature, which must everlastingly join the other two by righteousness--it is the abyss of glory, which in it righteous nature draws her naturally by nature--this concordance is purely noble. To better understand this, I propose a question: Which is nobler; the abyss of glory which draws the Soul and embellishes the beauty of her nature, or the Soul, who is joined to such glory?

(Soul to the hearers): I don't know if it bothers you, but I cannot do otherwise. Excuse me, but jealousy of love and works of charity, who used

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to burden me, had this book made so you can be the same, without stopping, at least in your volition, if you still have a will. So if you have already relinquished everything and are people without a will, leading a life beyond your understanding, she had it made so that you could at least know the meaning[2] of this book!

Chapter 61. Here Love speaks of the seven states of the Soul

(Love): I have said there are seven states, each of which is of higher understanding than the next, without comparison among them. No more could you compare a drop of water to the immensity of the ocean than you could compare the first to the second state, and so on with the others, without comparison among them. Of the first four, however, there is no state high enough to free the Soul from her servitude; but the fifth is greater in freedom of love, for it is not encumbered with all sorts of things; and the sixth is glorious, for the sweet movement of glory given by kind Far-Near is nothing more than an apparition of his own glory which God wants the Soul to experience, which she will have without end. And he, in his goodness, makes this demonstration of the seventh state from the sixth. This demonstration comes from the seventh state which proceeds from the sixth. This demonstration happens so quickly that even the one to whom it is given has no perception of his gift.

(Soul): What's so marvelous about that? If I had perceived it before such a gift were given, I would be what the giver is by divine goodness, who will be giving to me endlessly when my body shall have left my soul.

(Soul's Groom): It does not depend upon her. Through Far-Near I have sent my pledge-gift,[1] but there are some who are asking me who this Far-Near is, and about the work he accomplishes when he reveals his glory to the Soul. For this is not known unless Far-Near is the Trinity itself, and he shows her his demonstration, which we call "movement"; not that the Soul or the Trinity moves, but the Trinity works to show her glory to the Soul. This is not known except by the Godhead. The Soul, to whom Far-Near gives himself, has such knowledge of him, of God and all things she sees within herself, through divine knowledge. And the light of this knowledge takes away all consciousness of herself, of God and of all things.

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(Soul): It's true. Nothing more can be said. Yet if God wants me to have this great consciousness, he withholds it from me and prevents me from knowing it, for otherwise I would have no knowledge of it. And if he wants me to know myself, he takes that knowledge away also, since otherwise I couldn't have greater knowledge of myself.

(Love): What you say, Lady Soul, is true. There is no knowledge more certain or more profitable to have than of this work.

Chapter 62. Of those who are dead to mortal sin and born in a life of grace.

(Love): Listen, Reason, and take heed! I come back to the subject of the little ones. Such people, of whom we have spoken, who are dead to mortal sin and born in a life of grace, are not troubled with a guilty conscience, but repay God by doing just what he commands. They seek honors and are unhappy when they are scorned, But they refrain from pride, vanity and impatience, which lead to a sinful death. They like wealth, and are sad when they lose it, always saving themselves from a sinful death, for they would not love their wealth, from either loss or gain, against God's will. If they like comfort and rest in their pleasures, they refrain from inordinant pleasures. These people are dead to mortal sin and are born to a life of grace.

(Soul): Without doubt, such people are little on earth and even smaller in Heaven! And how discourteously they save themselves.

(Reason): Hey, Lady Soul, watch what you say! We dare not call anyone little who will be in God's sight for all eternity!

(Love): Truly, one cannot describe their pettiness in comparison to the grandeur of those who die a death of nature and who live in the life of the spirit.

(Reason): How well I know, and so do they. For if they said otherwise they would be lying, but they don't want to have anything to do with such grandeur. Indeed, they tell me, Reason, that they do not aspire to it nor do they wish to, since God has not commanded it, but has merely advised them.

(Soul): What they say is true, but they are discourteous.

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(Desire): Without doubt, discourteous indeed! They have forgotten that what Jesus Christ did for them would not be enough, if he hadn't suffered all that humanity can endure, even unto death.

Chapter 63. How Soul calls "common" those who think it is enough to be saved

(Soul): Oh sweet Jesus Christ, do not fret over such people. They are so self-absorbed, they forget, in their rudeness, that they have their fulfillment in you.

(Love): Without doubt, it's a great villainy.

(Soul): This is typical of the merchant class, whom the world calls "common", for noble people could neither handle merchandise nor are they self-absorbed. But I will tell you how I can be at peace with such people, Lady Love: when they are set outside your secret court, as a commoner from the court of a nobleman, by the judgement of his peers. There the commoner will have nothing if he is not of proper lineage, except in the king's court. I could be satisfied if they, too, were set outside your secret court, apart from the others who are called within. These others will never forget the works of your sweet courtesy; the scorn, the wretchedness and the insufferable torments you suffered for us. They will never forget the gifts of your suffering; rather, it will be for them a mirror and an example.

(Love): All other necessities are provided them, for Jesus Christ has promised it in the Gospel.[1] They are saved much more courteously than the others. Nevertheless, they are little, even smaller than can be expressed, compared to the grandeur of those who die in the life of the spirit.

Chapter 64. Here we speak of the Souls who are mortified in the life of the Spirit

(Love): No one tastes of this life unless he dies this death.

(Truth): This death brings the flower of God's love. Nothing stands between them and the Godhead, nor would they want anything. Such Souls cannot bear the remembrance of human love or the desire for holy feelings

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because of the pure divine love this Soul has for Love. This one dominion of Love gives her the burning flower of love. It is Love, herself who can bear witness.

(Love):[1] It's true. This love we speak of is the union of lovers, a kindled fire that burns without smoke.

Chapter 65. Here we speak of those who are seated on a high mountain above the wind[1]

(Love): Now Reason, you have heard something about these three deaths through which these souls come to three lives. Now I will tell you about those who are sitting on the mountain above the wind and rain. They have no shame, fear or dread for what may happen to them on earth. These Souls are secure, their gates are open and nothing can harm them; no work of charity would ever dare rush in. Such people sit on the mountain, and no one else can sit there.

(Reason): For God's sake, Lady Love, tell us what will happen to Shame, Humility's prettiest daughter, and Fear, also, who served the Soul so well and has done her so much good. And what will become of me, who never slept when she needed me. Alas! Will we all be thrown out of her house, now that she has become its master?

(Love): Not at all. Rather, the three of you will remain in her family and you will be her gatekeepers, so if anyone opposing Love should intrude upon her house, each of you will wake up. But you will perform no other duty than that of gatekeeper, for in any other situation she will not hear you, except, if she could stoop so low, in the case of any need or necessity. Such a creature is clothed with a holy life, as we have said, rather than with her own spirit, which was placed in her body at her creation. The body of her spirit is clothed rather than the spirit of her body, for the weight of the body is removed and diminished by holy works. And this Soul is in the sweet, unknown country where she loves, rather than in her own body through which she gives life. This is the power of the freedom of Love.

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Chapter 66. How the Soul is joyful at having taken leave of Reason and the other Virtues

(The little Holy Church): O sweet Divine Love!

(Soul): How small she is! There is scarcely anything left of her before she disappears, for which she will rejoice.[1]

(Reason): Nevertheless, tell me why you are so joyful?

(Soul): Lady Love will speak for me.

(Love): Because she has taken leave of you and of the works of the Virtues. For when this Soul first put on the mantle of Love, she learned a lesson in your school by desiring the works of the Virtues. Now she is so well-versed and advanced in holy teaching, she is beginning to read where you will come to your end. But this lesson is not written down in human hand but by the Holy Spirit, who writes this lesson miraculously, upon the Soul who is its precious parchment. This divine school is within her and her mouth is closed, for the human mind cannot express it in words.

Chapter 67. Here we tell of the land where this Soul dwells, and of the Trinity

(Reason): Love, please tell me more about the land in which this Soul dwells.

(Love): I tell you, that anyone who is where this Soul is, is of him, in him and by him, taking nothing from anyone except him. Now this Soul is in him, of him, for him, taking nothing from anyone but him.

(Truth) Thus she is in God the Father. For we believe that no other person in the Trinity has taken anything from anyone other than him, only the Father himself.

(Love): It is true, for God the Father has his own divine power without taking it from anyone else; for he, out of the abundance of his divine power, has given to his Son the same as to himself, and the Son takes it from the Father. So the Son is born of the Father and is equal to him. And from the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit, one person of the Trinity, not born, but being. In one way the Son is born of the Father; in another the Holy Spirit has its being through the Father and the Son.[1]

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Chapter 68. How by divine work this Soul is joined to the Trinity and how she calls "asses" those who live in the counsel of Reason

(Love: This Soul is completely melted, liquified, and absorbed in the high Trinity, joined and united to it, and she has no will other than divine will, through the divine operation of the entire Trinity, and a dazzling, bright light touches her and draws her near, and she says:

(Soul): Oh, you small-minded, coarse, and awkward people!

(Reason): Who are you talking to?

(Soul): To all those who follow your counsel. They are beasts and asses,[1] and their coarseness leads me to seal my lips and say no more to them, so they will consider me dead to this life. I will be in peace there without having to move. Their coarseness makes me to seal my lips in silence. This is a secret I learned in the secret court of that sweet land; a land in which courtesy is law, love is moderation and goodness is pasture. I am drawn by its sweetness; its beauty pleases me, its goodness sustains me. What more would I want as long as I live in peace?

Chapter 69. Here Soul says that the practice of the Virtues is only worry and toil

(Reason): For God's sake, sweet spotless flower, what do you think of our practice?

(Soul): It seems a worrisome labor! Nevertheless, one earns his bread and sustenance by toil and worry, and Jesus Christ exalted this labor with his own body. He saw the bestiality of those who thought they could save themselves through work and their dependence on it. And not wanting to lose them, Jesus Christ guaranteed them with his death, the Gospel, and with the Scriptures, showing the way to those who toil.

(Reason) And what way do you take, sweet Lady of ours, you who make and take your labor not in worry, but through the faith from which you have received these gifts?

(Soul): Not true! I am exempt from it. My better part is elsewhere, so far beyond it, and there is no comparison. It ends in God, who is timeless, but I have it through my better part, through him, since I am planted in my nothingness.

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Now Reason, you asked us what way we follow? And I told you, only in him: He who is so strong, he will never die; whose doctrine will never be written, not in example books[1] or by human doctrine, for his gift is formless. He has known from eternity that I trust in him without evidence. And, is there any greater evil than wanting proof of love? Certainly not, for it seems to me that Love is her own witness. That is enough for me. Wanting more, I would not believe.

(Reason): O Lady Soul, you have two laws: your law and our law. Ours is for believing and yours is for loving. So please tell us why you called those we nourish "beasts" and "asses."

(Soul): Those whom I call "asses" seek God in creatures, in churches[2] through worship, in creating Paradise, in human words, and in scriptures. And without doubt, Benjamin is not born in such people, for Rachel still lives; for Rachel must die to give birth to Benjamin, and not until Rachel dies can Benjamin be born.[3] Such people are like the novices who see him on the mountains and in the valleys, believing that God is subject to his works and sacraments. Alas, what a pity they have such evil, and they will still have it, as long as they follow these customs and practices! But those who worship God in all places, not just in the temples and in the churches, and who are in union with divine will, have a happier and more profitable time.[4]

(Reason): O highly born Soul, for God's sake tell us where you seek him. Where do you find him?

(Soul): I find him everywhere, and there he is. He is the deity--one God in three Persons. And God is everywhere. And there I find him.

Chapter 70. How such a Soul is what she is, by the grace of God

(Reason): O sweet lady of ours, tell us who you are, you who speak this way to us?

(Soul): By God's grace I am what I am. Therefore I am only that, and nothing else, which God is in me. And God is also the same being that he is in me. For nothing is nothing; and what is, is. Therefore, if I am, I am nothing except what God is. There is nothing but God, so no matter where I go I find nothing but God, for to tell the truth, there is nothing but him.

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[Author]:[1] This Soul loves in Truth, in God, but Truth loves what this Soul has become; and in this way the work of charity is fulfilled in her.

(Love): It's true. For all others except this Soul hide because they have lost their innocence, through Adam's sin.[2]

Chapter 71. How the Soul no longer performs works for God, nor for herself, nor for her neighbors

(Love): This Soul no longer performs works for God, for herself or for her neighbors, as we have said. But God, who can do them, does, if he so wills. If it is not in his will, it doesn't matter to him one way or the other; it is all the same to him. Thus the Soul has within her the rays of divine knowledge, drawing her out of herself, into a wonderful divine peace, filled to the brim with the affluent love of the almighty jealous God, who gives her magnificent freedom in all places.

(Soul): Jealous? Yes, he is truly jealous! It appears in his works which have stolen me from myself, and have put me in God's holy pleasure, outside myself. And this union of complete peace joins and conjoins me by the sovereign highness of creation prepared by the divine being, in whom I have being, who is Being.

(Love): When this Soul is thus drawn out of herself to God, for her sake, it is a divine work. No act of charity done by a human body could ever attain what this work achieves.

(Soul): Listen carefully, to the sweet words of Love, for they are hard to understand beyond the literal meaning of the words.[1]

(Love): It's true, for the work of a creature (meaning a man-made work) cannot compare to a divine work, done in the creature by God, in his goodness for the creature.

Chapter 72. Here we speak of the distance from the land of the perished and errant to the land of freedom, and why the Soul has a will

(Soul): Listen carefully to the sweet words of Love, for the perished

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and errant are a long way from the land of freedom and complete peace where we dwell.

(Love): It's true. I will speak to them.

(Soul): Indeed, in spite of the will in which the perished and errant dwell, thus living their life of perfection, such as it is.

(Love): When, in her courteous goodness, the Holy Trinity created the angels, the wicked ones, in their perversion, chose to side with Lucifer's evil will, who by nature wants to have what he can have by his own will and not by God's. And wanting this and forfeiting their will, they fell from grace. Now they are in Hell, without being, and will never regain the mercy of seeing God. And this high vision was lost to them through their will, which they could have kept to give to God. Now look at what has become of them!

(Truth): Alas, Alas! Why, Souls, do you love your will so much when it can cause such a loss?

(Love): Let me explain why Soul has a will: Because she still lives in the spirit, and the will remains in the life of the spirit.

(Reason): For God's sake, Love, tell me why you have named this chosen Soul you love so much "Soul," since the beginning of this book? You say that errant people keep their will, and still lead a life of the spirit, yet you have repeatedly called her by the small name of "Soul," which is a lesser name than the name of "Spirit."

(Love): You know, that is a good question!

To understand this better: all those who live a life of grace following the commandments, and for whom this is enough,[1] are truly called "souls," and not because of their life of grace. Even all the hierarchies of Heaven go by their genuine name of "angel." The first angel is not called a Seraph but just "angel," while the Seraphim are both angels and Seraphim.[2] Understand what this means implicitly:. For by the same token, I say that it is enough to keep the commandments for those who are called "souls," and not "spirits" Their proper name is "soul" and not "spirit," because they are far from the life of the spirit.

(Reason): And when does the soul become spirit?

(Love): When the body is completely mortified and the will rejoices in shame, poverty, and tribulation; only then does it become spirit. Then such spiritual creatures have purity of conscience, peace of affection,[3] and wise reasoning.

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Chapter 73. How the spirit must die in order to lose its will

(Reason): For God's sake, Lady Love, please tell me why the spirit must die in order to lose its will?

(Love): It's because the spirit is spiritually willful, and no one can live a holy life as long as he has a will, nor can he be fulfilled until he loses it. Yet, the spirit is not entirely dead until it has lost all emotional attachments, and until its will, which gave it life, is dead. For in this loss, the will is perfectly filled by the sufficiency of holy pleasure, and by this death, the surpassing life grows which is always made free or glorious.[1]

(Truth): O Lady Love, for God's sake, please show me a soul who has been perfected this state.

(Love): Gladly, and if she is not as I tell you, I order you to reprimand her and tell her that she is too poorly dressed and adorned to speak to me in my secret chamber. No Soul can enter there unless she is adorned as you heard me say.[2]

She is no lover of mine, unless she has no fear of losing or gaining, except for my pleasure. Otherwise, she would live for herself and not for me, with whom she should be. This bride of mine could not live for her own sake. If she had committed all the sins in the world, or accomplished all the good of the souls in Heaven, and if both her good and evil were shown to the people, such a Soul would feel neither shame nor honor for herself, nor desire to conceal or hide her evil. If she did otherwise, she would be living for herself and with herself, and not for me and with me.

Would those in my Paradise be ashamed if their sins were revealed along with the glorious gifts I have given? Certainly they have no desire to hide either their sins or their shame, if they were known, nor to reveal my glory.

(Truth): Of course not. They would leave it to the master who conceals or reveals according to his will. And the Souls, of whom we spoke, do the same, for they are vessels of this calling: Far-Near represents this noble gift to them.

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Chapter 74. Why Love calls Soul by such a small name as "Soul"

(Love): Now listen, Reason. You were asking us why I have called this Soul by such a small name as "Soul." Reason, I have frequently called her by her nickname because of your coarseness, and because the use of a nickname helps us to understand the teaching[1] of this book, and we will continue to use it, but her proper name is noble. She is called "pure," "celestial," and "bride of peace." For she sits in the depth of the valley from which she sees to the top of the mountain, and from which she also sees the mountain from the top. No intermediary can intrude upon her; thus the wise person safely hides his treasure, the holy gift of Love's unity. This unity gives her the peace and the marvelous, nourishing pasture in the glorious land where her Beloved dwells. Her dominions can only pasture in a glorious life.[3] This is the pasture of my chosen Betrothed, who is "Mary of Peace".[4] She is Mary of Peace, because Fine Love pastures her. Martha, you know, is too shackled and knows nothing of this. She is troubled by her shackles which keep her far from such a life.

Chapter 75. How the Enlightened Soul gives understanding of things already said by the example of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ

(Understanding of Divine Light): For Love's sake, now tell me, whoever of you who feel the need to hide, what this means to you?

(Enlightened Soul): I will tell you what it means to me!

(Those who feel the need to hide): We understand that when Jesus Christ was transfigured on Mount Tabor there were only three of his disciples with him[1]. He told them not to speak of it, and they said nothing until after his resurrection.

(Freed Soul to Nature's servants [who are hiding because of this]): Well said. You have given me the staff with which I will conquer you. So, I'll ask you, why did God do it?

(The hidden Soul): He did it for us. Since he taught this to us, why wouldn't we do it?

(Soul): O Sheep, you think like animals! You leave the grain and take the chaff. And I tell you, that when Jesus Christ was transfigured before

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three of his disciples, he did it so you would know that only a few would see the light of his transfiguration. He shows it only to his special disciples, and there were only three of them. This also happens in this world, when God gives himself with a burning light within a creature's heart. Now you know why there were only three of them.

Next, I'll explain why it was on a mountain. It was to demonstrate and signify that no one can see holy things as long as they are associated with temporal things, with things less than God. Now I will tell you why God told them not to talk about it until after his resurrection: to demonstrate that you can not utter a word about divine secrets, lest you take on foolish pride; and beyond that, one should say nothing. For I guarantee you this: if someone has something to hide or conceal, he has something to reveal, but he who reveals nothing has nothing to hide.

Chapter 76. Here the example of Magdelene and of the Saints shows the Soul is not ashamed of her sins

(Soul): Now take the penitent sinner: She was not ashamed of anything Jesus Christ had told her, for she had chosen the better and surer part, which is the "most" and it will never be taken away from her. Also she was not ashamed that her sins were known by everyone, even by the Gospel witness, which tells us all that God had cast seven demons out of her. She was ashamed of nothing except those she had sinned against; for she was invaded, seized, and overtaken. Still nothing mattered to her except him.[1]

Was St. Peter ashamed when God was resurrected from the dead in his shadow, after having denied him three times?[2] Certainly he was not ashamed; instead it was a great honor to him.

What was the shame and the glory of St. John the Evangelist when God used him to communicate the true Apocalypse after he had fled the place where Jesus Christ was arrested?[3]

(Soul): I believe that neither he nor the others were ashamed or honored, nor did they want to hide or conceal themselves. It mattered little to them what God did through them, for them and for the people, even if it was holy work. These examples should be enough for those who can

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understand, in order to comprehend the rest of what will be said, because this book is not written for the others.

Chapter 77. Here Soul asks if God has come to the end of the gifts of his goodness

(Soul): I have said that they were neither ashamed nor honored by what God did, nor did they want to hide for any reason, as you can see from what has been said.

(Truth): Without doubt they didn't know why, because they unburdened themselves and were completely in God.

(Soul): In God's name! If that is how God bestows his grace, will there be enough remaining to bestow as generously as before? Has he come to the end of the gifts of his goodness?

(Courtesy): Certainly not. His divine grace could not bear it. He needs nothing he has given away, and, as in former times, the great gifts he has to bestow are the same as ever, beyond utterance or imagination, if he desires to bestow them. Understand this through Love, for Love bids you to hear this. Love has so much to give, there is no end to it. It is as if she made two things into one in an instant.[1]

(Soul): But I would like to say one thing, not for the steadfast, for it doesn't concern them, but for those who are not and for those who are becoming steadfast, for it does concern them! That is, they should always be on their guard in case Love asks them to return something she has lent them. They must not refuse her anything, come what may, or refuse any Virtue at any time, whom Love has sent to carry her messages. For the Virtues carry Love's will in the guise of messengers, in letters sealed by their Lord, like the angels in the third heaven. Let them be aware, all those who receive Love's messengers, not to refuse in any way what the Virtues' request for the inner life, which must govern the body. They will never have peace with the Lord who has sent the messengers, but will be rebuked and troubled in their understanding and burdened by themselves through lack of trust. For Love says that "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

(Reason): Now answer this: If he doesn't help her in her time of need, when will he help her? Tell me!

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(Love): And if he doesn't remember me, what is so marvelous about that? It suits me to keep the peace of my divine justice and to render to each his own, not what isn't his, but what is his own.

Now understand the teaching[2] of this book: Whether a thing is prized or needed, it has the same value, nothing more. And when I wanted or needed you (by need, I mean send for), and it pleased me, you often refused my messengers. No one knows this but me, alone. I sent you my Thrones to fetch and adorn you, the Cherubim to enlighten you, and the Seraphim to embrace you.[3] I summoned you through all my messengers, and they showed you my desires, and the states to which I have called you, and you paid no heed. And seeing this, I left you to your own devices, saving yourself. If you had obeyed me, you would be someone else, by your own testimony. But by your will you hoped to save yourself, all by yourself, however much your life was burdened by your spirit, which will always be an encumbrance to it. And so you didn't obey my messengers or the Virtues when I wanted to free your body and your spirit, through these messengers. And because you didn't obey when I summoned you by the subtle Virtues I sent, and my angels with whom I cajoled you, I cannot lawfully give you my freedom, for Justice cannot do it. And if, at my summons, you had obeyed the will of the Virtues I sent, and the messengers through whom I implored you, you would rightfully have my freedom. O Soul, how burdened you are with yourself!

(Soul): Indeed, my body is faint and my soul is in dread. For I often worry, whether I want to or not, about these two natures which the free ones don't worry about, nor could they.

Chapter 78. How those who have not obeyed the teaching of perfection remain burdened with themselves until death

(Love): O languishing Soul, how distressed and impoverished you are! All this because you didn't obey the teaching of perfection which I impressed upon you to unburden you in the flower of your youth. Nevertheless, you never wanted to change, and you have never done anything about it. Rather you have constantly refused my demands which I made known to you by the noble messengers you have just heard about.

(To the hearers): Such people will remain burdened with themselves

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until death. If they had wished it, they surely would have been delivered from their condition, their great bondage, with little profit; from which, if they had wanted, they could have been so easily delivered. Indeed for such a small thing as giving themselves over to my will, which I showed them through the Virtues, whose office it is to show them the way. I mean that they'd all be free in soul and body, if they had followed my advice through the Virtues, who told them of my will. And since they didn't do it, they have remained as you have heard, with themselves. And this is known by the free, annihilated Souls, adorned with delight, who perceive on their own the servitude of others. They see it as a speck of dust in the sun's rays, through the splendor and radiance of the sun. When this sun fills the soul with such radiance and splendor, the body is no longer weak, nor the soul fearful; for the Sun of Righteousness[1] heals and cures no Soul without also healing the body when he performs his earthly miracles. He still often does so, but not for those who lack faith in him.

Now you can see and hear that anyone who trusts in God is great, strong, free, and unburdened of all things, and God blesses him.

But concerning those I have cajoled to obey Virtue's perfections, I have said they have done nothing, and they will be burdened with themselves until death. And again I say, if they worked and exercised their will each day to individually attain the perfection of the apostles, they would not be unburdened of themselves. No one expects it, for they can't do it on their own--meaning in body and soul. No, truly not yet, since coarseness and interior arguments don't work. It is impossible to go backwards, and everything they do is completely burdened by themselves. This should be known by all those who undertake a work on their own, without a burning light within.

Chapter 79. How the Freed Soul counsels not to refuse the requests of the good spirit

(Freed Soul): If I warn all those who are studying a life of perfection to be on their guard, it is so they will not refuse the demands of the burning desire of the spirit's will, which is precious if they are to attain the best after the so-called "errant life" and the "life of the spirit."

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(Love): I have warned them to be on their guard, for they need to be, if they wish to attain the best. This life is a time of service and domesticity, preparing a house for the coming of a greater state dwelling there, the Freedom of Non-wanting. The Soul is completely aware of this state, knowing that nothingness gives everything. For he who gives all has all, and otherwise not.

(Soul): Still, I would like to say to the errant, that if they remain peaceful, fulfilling perfectly the will of the burning and cutting desire working in the spirit,[1] and as I said, resisting the workings of the mind so they would have no inclination apart from the will of the spirit, then, after doing this, they will come, as rightful heirs, nearer to this state of being we spoke of.

(Love): This Soul would be the eldest daughter of the highest king, who is of faultless nobility. And this lady has attained this state which is the most noble, and I will tell you why. She has no empty place within that is not filled with me, so she harbors no cares, memories or any semblance of herself. Yet, Pity and Courtesy have not departed from this Soul, and they are ready when needed.

(Soul) And it is proper that Pity and Courtesy have not departed me, for they didn't depart from Jesus Christ, by whom I have newness of life. Although her sweet soul was glorified as soon as she was joined to the mortal body and divine nature of the person of the Son, nevertheless, Pity and Courtesy remained within her. A courteous person only loves what he should love. No one who loves temporal things ever loved the humanity of the Son of God. No one who loves corporally never loved divinely. Those who love his divinity perceive little of his humanity. No one has ever been joined and divinely filled who has felt corporally. And what would they feel? For if God doesn't move, then nothing moves! Now understand the noble meaning of this writing.

(Reason): Oh how strong were all those Souls who appeared before John the Baptist![2]

(Love): Was he ever weak or encumbered with himself?

(Soul): Certainly not. Love doesn't destroy, but rather instructs, nurtures and sustains those who trust in her, for she is satisfied to the depth and filled with the sea.

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Chapter 80. How the Soul sings and stops singing

(Soul): I am singing. Now I sing, and now I don't for all those who are not yet free, so they will hear one bit of freedom, for they need such a thing in order to be reached.

(Love): By divine light this Soul has perceived the land where she should be, and she has crossed the sea to taste the marrow of the high cedar tree.[2] No one tastes or reaches this marrow except by crossing the high sea and by drowning his will in its waves. Listen friends, to this saying:

I have said earlier that through me this Soul has fallen into nothingness; rather into less than infinitely nothing. For as God is incomprehensible with regard to his power, likewise this Soul, in her incomprehensible nothingness, is in debt[3] for one hour of time when her will opposed his. She owes him this without discounting the debt her will deserves, as often as she has deprived God of his will.

(Soul): O true God, you see and suffer this. Who will pay this debt?

(Soul replies herself): O dearest Lord, only you will pay it. For your full, overflowing goodness and courtesy wouldn't tolerate Love's gift exempting me, whose debts you paid all in one moment. Sweet Far-Near took away the last penny of my debt and he told me that you owe me as much as I owe you. For if I owe you as much as you are worth, you owe me as much as you have. Such is the generosity of your divine nature. And so, according to Far-Near, of whom I spoke earlier, these two debts cancel each other out, and are henceforth one.[4] And I agree, for it's the advice of my neighbor.

(Reason): And in God's name, Lady Soul, who is your best neighbor?

(Soul): The ravishing, overwhelming union which suddenly seized me and joined me to the marrow of Divine Love, where I melted.[5] So I should remember him, for I am back in his keeping. I will speak no more of this state, for there is nothing more to be said.

(Love): Surely not. One could no more shut off the sun than this Soul can speak of this life, compared to what it really is like.

(Amazement): Lady Soul, you are a source of Divine Love.
From this source of divine love
is born the fountain of divine knowledge.
From this source of divine love
and this fountain of divine knowledge
is born the river of divine praise.

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(Soul who is confirmed in nothingness): I completely relinquish everything to divine will!

Chapter 81. How nothing matters to this Soul, not herself, not her neighbor, not even God himself

(Love): Now this Soul has no name in this nothingness where she dwells. Since she is nothing, nothing matters to her: not herself, not her neighbors, not even God, himself. She is so small she cannot be found, and all created things are so distant she can't feel them. God is so great that he is incomprehensible to her. By this nothingness she has fallen into the certainty of knowing nothing and wanting nothing. This nothingness gives her everything. And it cannot be achieved in any other way.

This Soul is imprisoned and detained in a land of perfect peace. She is in a constant sea of contentment, where she wafts and wanes, drifts and drowns in divine peace, not moving within, not working without. Two things could deprive her of this peace if they could intrude, but they cannot. She is in the sovereign state where they cannot harm her or disturb her at all. If she does something on the outside, it is always without him. If God works within her, it is he in her, without herself, and for herself. She is no longer encumbered by what her angel used to protect her from, for an angel is no longer charged to guard us when there is nothing to guard.[1] And it is the same with what she does without him, for she can do nothing if she has nothing from him. She has given up everything freely, without asking why, for she is the lady of the bride of his youth[2]. He is the resplendent sun which warms and nurtures the life whose being proceeds from him.[3] This Soul retains no doubt, and no anxiety.

(Reason): And how can this be?

(Love): Through the true alliance and unity to will only the divine ordinance.

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Chapter 82. How this Soul is free in all four quarters[1]

(Love): This Soul of perfect nobility is free in all four quarters, for a nobleman should have four quarters to be called a gentleman and to have spiritual understanding.

The first quarter in which this Soul is free is that she is not guilty if she doesn't practice acts of Virtue. For God's sake, hear this, if you can! Why would Love bother with acts of Virtue, when all works must cease when Love is at work?

The second quarter is that she has no will, any more than the dead in their graves, with the one exception of divine will. Justice and mercy don't matter to her. All is planted and set in the will of her Beloved. This is the second quarter in which this Soul is free.

The third quarter is in her belief that there never is, never was, nor ever shall be a more wretched person than her, and no one better loved for what she is. Take note of this and don't misunderstand it.

The fourth quarter is her belief that God could not possibly have any other will than goodness, and likewise she believes that she could not have any other will than his divine will. Love has adorned this Soul with God, making her believe in him, and into whose goodness her goodness is transformed. God, in his love, has transformed her love into his, and her will he has also changed into his, a divine will, purely transformed. It is of him, by him for her, the same, and she believes this. Otherwise she would not be free in all respects.

Understand my meaning,[2] you hearers of this book! For in this is found the seed which the bride nurtures.[3] It is as if she is in the state in which God intended her to be; in giving up her will she can no longer do anything, except in the will of the One who graciously transformed her into himself, for her sake. Thus she is free in all respects; her name is lost and she is elevated in sovereignty. Her name is lost in the One in whom she has her being, melted in him and hidden in him for her own sake. She is like water which comes from the sea and becomes a river with a name like Seine or Oise. When the stream flows back to the sea, it loses its current and the name it had when it flowed in many lands, doing its work. Now it is in the sea, resting, and it toils no more. It is the same with this Soul.

This is given to you as an example to explain how this Soul comes from

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the sea and has a name; and how she goes back to the sea, thus losing her name, taking nothing other than the name of the One, the Bridegroom, in whom she is perfectly transformed. The love of the Bridegroom of her youth has transformed this Bride completely into himself. He is what she is, and he is marvelously satisfied, so she is marvelously satisfied. This is the pleasure of Love, where she is love, and he delight.

Chapter 83. How Soul has the name of what Love changed her into

(Love) Being nameless, this Soul has taken the name of what she has become, Love. She is like the water we spoke of which assumes the name of the sea it joins, for it becomes the sea as soon as it returns to the sea. As fire attracts matter and makes one thing of itself and the matter, and not two, so it is with those of whom we speak; for Love draws all their matter into herself. Love and the Souls become one thing, not two, for that would be discord. But they are one thing, and that is accord.

Chapter 84. How the Soul and her four quarters are promoted in sovereignty and she freely leads a holy life

(Love): I am saying that once a Soul is free in these four quarters, she is next promoted in sovereignty.

(Reason): O Love! Is there no higher gift?

(Love): Of course there is. It is her closest neighbor.[1] For, once she is free in her four quarters, all her descendant branches are noble, for no commoner is ever taken in marriage, and that is why she is noble. Then she falls into an astonishment called "non-thinking from close Far-Near" who is her closest neighbor. Thus, this Soul lives not only a life of grace and of the spirit, but also a holy life—freely, not gloriously, for she is not glorified—but she lives divinely, for God has sanctified her for this. There nothing can intrude which opposes his goodness.

(Author to the hearers): Listen carefully, for it is as if she were in this state: God continually gives being without taking. I say this for the sake of the people for whom Love had this book written, for I am writing it

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for them. For those of you who were not, are not, and will not be in this state; you complain in vain if you want to understand it. You can't taste what isn't there; neither yourself "without being" in God, or God "being" in you.[2] Mark these words,[3] for the nurturer tastes and savors; and, as is often said, "Bad taste, bad nurture".[4]

(Reason Burdened): That is certainly well put.

(Soul Astonished in Non-Thinking by Far-Near, who peacefully delights in her): You can hardly imagine or speak of the coarseness which burdens Reason! And her disciples are the same! An ass trying to hear them would have nothing to tell! But God has kept me from such disciples! I will not follow their advice, and I no longer wish to hear their doctrine, for I followed it too long, whatever good it did me. But now, what little they know is not in my best interest, for small minds cannot value what is of real worth, for they do not understand anything beyond Reason's province, and if they do understand, it is not often.

And so I say, that I no longer wish to hear their coarseness: let them speak no more to me; I can no longer bear it! I have no why or wherefore, for God is in this work and he does his work in me. I owe him no work, because he works in me. If I added my work, I would undo his own. And then Reason's disciples would restore me to the poverty of their counsel, if I were to believe them. They are wasting their time, for it is an impossible task, yet I excuse them for their good intentions.

Chapter 85. How the Soul is free, freer, and freest

(Love): This Soul is free, freer, the freest; rather overwhelmingly free from the plant, the stalks and all the branches, and from all the fruit of the branches. This Soul has perfected her heritage of freedom; each quarter has its field adorned.[1] She answers to no one who is not of her lineage if she doesn't care to, for a nobleman would not deign to speak to a commoner if he called or challenged him to the field of battle. So this Soul ignores those who call her. Her enemies get no response from her.

(Love): This Soul is scorched by mortification and burned by the flaming fire of charity, and her ashes are thrown to the high sea by the nothingness of her will. She is nobly distinguished in prosperity, highly

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noble in adversity and nobly excellent in all places, whatever they may be. Such as she is, she no longer sees God through penitence, or through any sacrament of the Holy Church, not by thought, word or deed, not through earthly or heavenly creatures, not through justice, mercy, honor or glory, not by divine knowledge, love or praise.[2]

Chapter 86. How Reasons marvels at what Soul says

(Reason): My God, my God, my God! What is this creature saying? I am completely astounded! But what will my pupils say? I wouldn't know what to say, or how I could respond to settle this.

(Soul): It's not such a miracle to me, for those people have:
feet without a path,
hands without work,
a mouth without words,
eyes without sight,
ears without hearing,
a mind without reason,
a body without life,
and a heart without understanding,
all who reach this state.
So your pupils have miracle,
upon miracle, upon miracle.[1]

(Love): For they are miracles indeed, truly miraculous for them, for they are too far removed from the land where these things commonly occur to have this excellence. But for those who reach this state and are from this land, and in whom God lives, it is not a miracle at all.

(Freed Soul): Not at all, that would be a sign of villainy, and I will show and tell you how, by an example: If a king gave one of his servants, who had loyally served him, a great gift which would make the servant rich forever without ever having to be in service again, why would a wise man wonder at this? He certainly wouldn't be amazed, for in so doing he would offend the king, his gift and the servant who was freed by the gift.

(Courtesy): And I will tell you how and why. A wise man isn't all

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that surprised when people do what they are supposed to do; instead he exalts, appreciates, and loves it; for if he were amazed he would imply that they had done something improper. But a common-hearted person, with little wisdom, doesn't recognize, through mindlessness, the honor and the courtesy of a gift from a noble lord, and he would be very amazed.

(Truth): From what I have heard, you have rightly told us why it is not a miracle.

(Nobility of the Freed Soul's Unity): Goodness, why would anybody with any sense at all be amazed if I say new and great things, or if I have everything everywhere in complete and full sufficiency? My Beloved is great and gives me grand gifts, and as he is completely new, he gives me new gifts; and, as he is filled and replete with his own abundance, so I am filled, sufficed and abundantly content with the bountiful delight of the goodness which overflows from his divine goodness. I need not seek through pain and effort the comforts described in this book.

(Soul): He is, and that is enough for me.

(Pure Courtesy): Of course that's right. It is right for the Beloved, being worthy, to satisfy his loved one with his goodness.

Martha is fretting, Mary is in peace
Martha is praised, but Mary more so
Martha is loved, but Mary much more.

Mary is of one mind, that is, she has a single intention, which gives her peace, but Martha often has many, and this troubles her peace. Thus the Free Soul can only have one intention.

This Soul often hears what she doesn't hear,
and often sees what she does not see,
and she often is where she is not
and often feels what she doesn't feel
and thus she holds her Beloved and says:
(Soul): "I hold him, for he is mine.
I will not let him go.
He is in my will, come what may,
for he is with me.
I shall not worry,
for that would be wrong."

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Chapter 87. How this Soul is the queen of the Virtues and a daughter of the Godhead

(Love): This Soul is queen of the Virtues, daughter of the Godhead, the sister of Wisdom and the bride of Love.

(Soul): Indeed, but these seem amazing words to Reason. It isn't amazing, for in a little while she will expire. As for me, I am and will be forever, without end. Since Love is without beginning or end, I do not exist except by Love. How then could I be otherwise? It could not be.

(Reason): My God, how dare you say that? I dare not listen. For I can barely hear you, Lady Soul, my heart is failing! I am dying!

(Soul): Alas! But it's about time! For as long as I had you, Lady Reason, I could not claim my rightful inheritance, but now I can freely claim it since I have mortally wounded you with Love.

Now reason is dead.

(Love to the beloved Soul who is Love and nothing but Love, since Love, in her divine goodness, has trampled Reason to death, along with the works of the Virtues, from which they will never return): So I will say what Reason would say if she were alive in you. She would ask you this, our dear beloved:

Chapter 88. How Love asks what Reason would ask if she were alive, to find out who is the mother of Reason and of the other Virtues

(Love): I will say what Reason would ask if she were alive. She would ask who her mother is and who is the mother of the Virtues who are akin to her, and if they, in turn, are anyone's mother.

(Love, to herself): All the Virtues are mothers.

(Soul): And whose mother are they? Of Peace?

(Love): Of Holiness!

(Soul): So all the Virtues who are related to Reason are mothers of Holiness.

(Love): Indeed so. Of Holiness, alone, as Reason understands it.

(Soul): Then who is mother to the Virtues?

(Love): Humility. Not the Humility produced by the Virtues, for she

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is Reason's sister-cousin. I say "sister," for a mother is a greater thing than a child, infinitely more, as you can see.

(The Soul speaks for Reason): Where does this Humility, who is mother to the Virtues come from? Whose daughter is she, and how does she come to be the mother of such great lineage as the Virtues, and the aunt of Holiness, whose mother is the Virtues? Who is this Holiness's ancester? Can anyone say where this lineage came from?

(Love): Not at all, for the one who knows cannot put it into words.

(Soul): It's true. But I would rather lie than put it into words.

This Humility, who is aunt and mother
is a daughter of the Divine Majesty, and born of Divinity.
God is the mother and grandmother of her branches,
Of whom the offspring are very fruitful.
We will say no more, as words are ruinous.
This Humility,
has given the stalk and the fruit of its offspring,
that is why there is near-by,
the peace of Far-Near,
who unburdens her of work,
and works turn her sour,
and thoughts make her obscure.
This Far-Near unburdens her,
Nothing encumbers her.
She is free of all duties,
for she lives in freedom.
Whoever serves is never free,
Whoever feels is never dead,
Whoever desires, wants,
Whoever wants, begs,
Whoever begs, is lacking
in divine contentment.

But those who are always loyal to her are overcome by Love, annihilated by Love and completely stolen by Love, so they care for nothing except Love, forever suffering and enduring torments as great as God in his goodness. A Soul who has any doubt of this truth will never love purely.

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But those who are loyal to her are always overcome by Love, annihilated by Love and completely stolen by Love, so they care for nothing except Love, forever suffering and enduring torments as great as God is in his goodness. A Soul who doubts this truth will never love purely.

Chapter 89. How the Soul has given up everything in the freedom of her nobility

(Love): This Soul has given up everything in the freedom of the noble work of the Trinity. She grafts her naked will in the Trinity and unless she is uprooted, she cannot sin. There is no way she can sin, for without a will no one can sin. So she is not wary of sinning if her will remains grafted in him who freely gave it to her in his goodness. But he valiantly wanted to take her back as his Bride, free, stripped, and unquestioning, and for two reasons: because he wills it and because he is worthy of it. Not until she is completely stripped of her will can she partake of this plentiful and unusual peace.[1]

This soul resembles someone who is always drunk. It doesn't matter to a drunk what happens to him, or the shape of things to come, or even if nothing happens at all; if he cared he wouldn't be drunk. And so, if this Soul has any will at all, it means that she is poorly grafted and that she still might fall if she is hit by adversity or prosperity. She is not "all," so she cannot be "nothing" as long as she has a will, and as long as her poverty and wealth consist of wanting to give or retain.

And I would like to say more to all those, who, whether they like it or not, are summoned and called by their inner desire to works of perfection accomplished by cultivating Reason: if they wanted to be what they could be, they could attain the state of which we spoke, and could again be lords of themselves and of heaven and earth.

(Reason): What do you mean by "lords"?

(Free Soul who has all without feeling, for if her heart feels, she is nothing): No one can say.

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Chapter 90. How one can achieve perfection by doing the opposite of his will

(Love): I have said that whoever follows the bidding of his inner spirit--being called in good will, for otherwise I cannot say--and leaving all his will outside to live the life of the spirit, he will also achieve complete lordship.

(Spirit who has sought it through a errant life): For God's sake, tell us how!

(Free Soul). Only the unique creature whose nature is goodness itself can express it. But this much I can tell you; that in order to achieve complete lordship he must do the complete opposite of his will, feeding the Virtues to the gullet, keeping steadfast without fail, so that the spirit might have lordship without interference.

(Truth): My God! The body containing such a spirit would surely be sick!

(Free Soul): I dare say that this volition which is necessary to a an errant life, a life of the spirit, would destroy[1] the infection of any illness in a split second. An ardent spirit is that strong a medicine.

(Love): It's true. Anyone who doubts can try it, and he will know the truth! Now I will explain. In a life opposite to Freed Soul's (which we have described, calling it the "life of the spirit") there is no peace unless the flesh always acts against its will, which means such people must act against their sensuality, or else they'd fall back into the perdition of that life, if they didn't do the opposite of their pleasure.

But those who are free do the complete opposite. For, while the errant in the life of the spirit must do the opposite of their will if they want to keep their peace; yet, on the contrary, the Freed Souls do what they please, keeping their peace, since they have attained the state of freedom, and have fallen from the Virtues into Love, and from Love into nothingness.

Chapter 91. How the will of these Souls is Love's will and the reason why

(Soul): They do nothing which doesn't please them, and if they did they would be depriving themselves of peace, freedom and nobility. For the

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Soul is not purified until she does what she pleases, and feels no guilt for doing what she pleases.

(Love): That's correct. Her will is our own: she has crossed the Red Sea and her enemies remain within it.[1] Her pleasure is our will, by the purity and unity of God's will in which we enveloped her. Her will is our own, for she has fallen from grace into perfection by the Virtues' work, and from the Virtues into Love; from Love into Nothingness, and from Nothingness into God's Clarity,[2] which is revealed in the eyes of his majesty which he, himself clarified. And she is so taken up into him that she no longer sees him, nor herself; so he sees only God in his divine goodness. He will be by himself in this goodness which he knew before she ever was, when he gave her his goodness and made her his queen. Free Will is such that he cannot take it back without her kind permission, but he has her now without question, to the extent that he had her before she was queen. There is no one but him; no one loves but him, for there is none but him so he loves alone, sees himself alone and he is alone in praise of himself in what he is, in himself. And here I stop, for it is the most noble state a Soul can have on this side.

There are five states before this one, and one must completely fulfill the demands of each before the Soul can reach this, the sixth, which is the most profitable, the noblest and the most sublime. Paradise is the seventh and it is perfect there, to a fault. This is how God, in his goodness, accomplishes his divine work in his creatures. The Holy Spirit breathes where he will and is marvelous in his creatures.[3]

Chapter 92. How the Soul excludes herself of God, herself, and her neighbor

(Satisfied Soul): O Lord, you have suffered so much for us and have worked so hard within us, through yourself, of yourself, that these two works, Lord, are finally accomplished.

Now Lord, do your work in us for your own sake without us, as you please. As for me, I am without strength. I clear myself of you, of myself and of my neighbors, and I'll tell you how. I relinquish you, myself, and my neighbors—everything, to the knowledge of your divine wisdom, to the control of your divine power, and to the governing of your divine goodness,

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according to your one divine will. And these divine things alone, annihilated, clarified, and glorified by divine majesty, have given me freedom in all things; without return, for otherwise, if anything were lacking, it would not be a gift.

(To the slaves of Reason and Nature to encourage their desire): Now if you want this gift and have received it, listen: I owe nothing, whether or not Love is a slave (which couldn't be) and when there is such nothingness. God, himself lives in such a creature, who does nothing to prevent it.

Chapter 93. A description of the peace of a holy life

(Author): The peace of such a holy life is beyond thought or description, for the Soul is so involved in this love without works of the body, heart, or mind that she fulfills the law by divine work. Reason esteemed Mary Magdalene for seeking out Jesus Christ, but Love was quiet[1]. Take note of this and don't forget it, for she fell short of a holy life--which Truth calls a glorious life--in seeking him out. But when she was in the desert, Love possessed and annihilated her. And this is why Love worked in her, for her and without her, so she could then live a holy life, which to her was a glorious life. Then she found God within her, without seeking him, and so she had nothing because Love had possessed her. But before Love possessed her she sought Love through desires, feelings, and emotions, and as such she was human and petty, for she was marred and not Mary.[2] While she was searching she didn't know that God was everywhere, otherwise she wouldn't have sought him. I have never found anyone who knew this except the Virgin Mary. She never had desires, feelings, or emotions apart from divine will leading to holy works. To wish only to do the divine will--that is what was, is, and will be his holy vision, his holy food, his holy love, his holy peace, his holy praise, all his labor, and all his rest. And so she had the glorious life of the Trinity in her mortal body without any intermediary to her soul.

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Chapter 94. The language of a holy life

(Author): The language of a holy life is the secret silence of Divine Love. She has long possessed and desired it. Now her life consists entirely in a state of continually wanting the divine will.

You need not put off relinquishing yourself, for one will not rest in the highest possible resting place unless he leaves everything, of this I am certain. Let the Virtues do in you what is theirs to do; cutting into the center of your spirit's affection until they have emptied you of all you owe to Jesus Christ.[1] This must be done before coming into a holy life.

For God's sake, hear what Jesus himself said: Didn't he say in the Gospel that "the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and in fact will do greater works than these"?[2] What is the true teaching[3] of these words, I ask you? Until you have paid Jesus Christ everything you owe him you cannot have peace in the land of divine being where there is life. May God quickly give you the accomplishment of your natural perfection, the concord of the forces in your soul, and satisfaction in all things! This you should have, for it is the pathway to divine life which we call the "glorious life." Love, in her goodness, has provided the model of this state we describe, and today she takes the soul back to her first day. One who is brought back to the first day will acquire through divine obedience the earthly paradise which Adam lost through disobedience. Yet the pain remains within them: since Jesus Christ takes it on himself, it is normal that it remain with us. The truly innocent are never right and are never wronged. They are completely naked and have nothing to hide. Many hide because of Adam's sin, but not those who are annihilated, for they have nothing to hide.

Chapter 95. How the land of the errant souls is far from the land of those who are annihilated

(Author to hearers): It is a very long way from the land of the Virtues, held by the errant souls, to the land of the naked and forgetting souls who are annihilated, or to the land of the Clarified souls, who are in the highest state where God is relinquished in and of himself. There he is known, loved, or praised only by those creatures who cannot know, love, or

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praise him. Such is the summation of all their love and the last stage of their way. The last stage leads back to the first, and the middle stage offers no diversion. This Soul has finished the course,[1] and she fittingly rests in the One who can do whatever he wills because of the goodness proper to his divine being. And she can do what she wants without forsaking the gifts of the One in whom she has her proper being. And why wouldn't she? His gifts are as great as the Giver of the gift which transforms her into himself. It is Love herself, and Love does what she wants, and as such, Dread, Discernment, and Reason can say nothing against her.

She lives to the fullest of her understanding, and God lives it in her without any impediment on her part, and that is why the Virtues can in no way reproach her. Thus, she can say to God:

Chapter 96. Here the Soul speaks to the Trinity

(Soul): O Lord, all powerful
O Beloved most worthy
Dear Father,
Dear Son,
And so,
O Master, all knowing
Thy will be done!
I am powerless;
I know nothing;
I will nothing.[1]

O Lord God, may we never permit anything to enter us which is of ourselves or of others, which would cause you to depart from your goodness!

(Author to hearers): Once upon a time there was a creature, a beggar-woman who had long sought God, willfully trying to find him within a creature, like herself, who would allow him to do his divine works in her without impediment. But she didn't find him, and instead kept hungering for what she was seeking. Realizing that she found nothing, she began to think, and her thinking informed her to seek him out, and so she called for him in the depth of her innermost understanding through the purity of her highest thoughts. And so this beggar-woman set out to find him there, and she thought she would write about God in the way she wanted to find him in his creatures. And thus this beggarly creature wrote what you now hear. She hopes that her neighbors can find God in her, in her writings and in her

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words. In other words, she would hope that her neighbors would be exactly as she described them--at least those whom she hopes to address--and in doing, saying, and in wanting this she would remain, as you know, a beggar-woman burdened with herself. So she still begs because of her will.[2]

Chapter 97. How Heaven is nothing other than seeing God

(Exalted Damsel of Peace, who lives a life of glory; rather, glory, itself, which is only in Heaven): Paradise is certainly nothing other than seeing God. For thus, the thief was in Paradise the moment his soul departed his body. While Jesus Christ the Son of God didn't ascend to Heaven until the day of the Ascension, the thief was in paradise that very day, on Good Friday.[1] And how can this be? It must be so because Jesus Christ promised it to him. And it is true that he was in Paradise that very day: because he saw God, he was in Paradise to partake of it. For Paradise is nothing other than seeing God. And anyone can truly be there to the extent that he is unburdened of himself, not gloriously, for the body is too heavy in such a creature; but he is there divinely, for his inner being is completely delivered of its creature-hood. So he lives a life of glory, without intermediary, and is in Paradise without being there.

Closely interpret the teaching[2] of these words, if you wish to understand them, or else you may well misunderstand them. They would seem contradictory to someone who cannot understand the hidden meaning at the core, but seeming is not truth. Truth is what it is, nothing else.

Just what was she thinking, she who wrote this book, she who wanted God living within her, just as she described God? It seems like she wanted revenge; that is, she wanted other creatures to be begging from one-another just as she herself did!

(Soul who writes the book): Of course. You would have to do so in order to attain the state of freedom in every respect. Of this I am certain. And yet, I was so foolish at the time I wrote this book, or rather Love did it for me at my request, that I valued things that cannot be done, thought, or spoken, as someone who would expect to swallow the ocean in his eye and carry the world on the end of a yolk, or light up the whole sky with

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a lantern or a torch. I was even more foolish than someone who would hope to do these things,

when I valued things which are unspoken
and when these written words became my burden.
But thus I find my way,
and come to find my aid,
in the very last bourn,
in the state we describe,
which as perfection is known,
when the Soul dwells,
in pure nothingness,
without thought;
and not before that.

Chapter 98. Reason asks what they do, those whose state is above their thoughts

(Reason): For God's sake, what do they do, those whose state of being is above their thoughts?

(Love): They are astounded by the One who is at the top of his mountain, and completely amazed by the One who is at the bottom of the valley,[1] by a non-thinking which is shut and sealed in the secret chamber of the highest purity of this excellent Soul. Once opened, this chamber can only be opened, unsealed or closed by noble Far-Near, both very far and very near. He alone opens and closes it, and he alone has the keys, and no one else can carry them, nor could they carry them.[2]

(To the Freed Souls): And among you, ladies, whom God has given this life, abundantly, and without return, in his divine goodness--and not only this life of which we speak, but also the one of which no one has ever spoken--you will recognize your practices in this book. And for those who are not, they will never be so, nor will they ever know or experience this state. They cannot and will not. Know this: these souls are not of the noble lineage we described, any more than the angels of the first order are Seraphim, nor could they ever be, for God didn't give them the state of Seraphim.[3] And the souls who have not achieved this state--they are in

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God, so one day they will achieve it--they will know this state and will experience it even more fully than they ever knew or felt it before, because of the lineage they have and will have. Know this: the people of whom we speak are and will be in this state, and they will recognize their proper lineage once they hear tell of it.

Chapter 99. How such people in this state are rulers over all things

(Author to hearers): People who are in this state rule over all things, for their spirit is of the highest nobility, as among the orders of angels, created and ordained. Of all the spiritual hierarchies, they dwell in the highest mansion, and their nature is of the noblest disposition; so they are of a sanguine or choleric temperament, not melancholy or phlegmatic.[1] Thus they have the greatest portion of the gifts of destiny, for everything is theirs by will or necessity, for themselves and their neighbors, without Reason's reproach. Listen with longing as we describe the great perfection of Annihilated Souls:

Chapter 100. How there are great differences among angels, one from another

(Love): They say, and I have said so myself, that the differences in the natures of the angels are as great as between men and asses! It is easy to believe: divine wisdom has made it so. Nobody asks why for fear of error, but believe it, for it is true. And as much as can be said about the the different angels, which you have heard; the same can be said, through grace, of the difference between the annihilated ones of whom we spoke and all those who are not.

They are well-born, those of this lineage, and they are royal people. Their hearts are of excellent nobility and are highly enterprising. They could not do a work of insignificant value, nor begin anything which wouldn't result in perfection. They are the least they can be and the greatest of what they should be, by the witness of Jesus Christ himself, who said "the least shall be greatest" in the kingdom of Heaven.[1] They should be believed; yet anyone unlike them does not believe them. He who is what

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he believes, believes it truly; but he who believes that he is nothing, lives nothing he believes. He truly believes nothing, for the truth of believing consists in being what one believes. And he who believes this is he who is this. He has nothing more to do with himself, his neighbors, or even with God, any more than if he were non-existent, although he is. Understand the teaching of this:[2] It is in his will, for what **is** means nothing more to him than what **isn't**. These three utterances contain the fullest perfection of this clear life. I call it "clear" because it surpasses the blind soul's annihilated life. The blind soul clings to its feet, while the clear-eyed Soul is the most noble and genteel. She is not aware of God or of man, for she is nothing. But in and of himself, God is aware of this for her and in her. Such a Lady seeks only God; she does nothing except what she does through him. Lacking nothing, what would she seek? He who seeks is with himself, is self-possessed, and if he needs something he pursues it.

Chapter 101. How this Soul does not want to do anything, so she lacks nothing, not even her Beloved

(Soul): Goodness! How could I do anything my Beloved would not do? He lacks nothing so what could I lack? I would be truly erring if I needed anything, since he needs nothing. He lacks nothing, therefore I lack nothing. And in this he takes away my self-love and gives me himself without intermediary and without restraint. I have said that he lacks nothing, so why should I be lacking? He seeks nothing; so what should I seek? He thinks nothing, so why should I think?

(The Annihilated Soul, clarified by lack of self-love): I will do nothing, Reason, but you will seek someone who does, knowing you as I do! But thank God, I am no longer in your care. I am finished with it!

(Reason): But since when? And at what time?

(Soul) Since the time Love opened her book to me. This book is of such a quality, that as soon as Love opens it, the Soul knows everything; so she has everything, and every work of perfection is completed in her by the opening of this book. This opening made me see quite clearly that I had to give back what is hers and take back what is mine. In other words, God is

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because he has always possessed himself; I am nothing because I should be nothing. The light from opening the book let me find and then abide in what is mine, and that is why what being I do have consists of what I derive from him. Thus Justice, by right, has given me back what is mine and has nakedly revealed that I am not, for he wills through justice that I not possess myself. This justice is written in the very middle of the Book of Life.[1] Thus it proceeds from this book and from me as it did from God and the creatures when he created them. He wills it in his divine goodness, and everything was created in that same moment of divine power, and completely ordained in that very hour by his divine wisdom.

O my God! Just look at what he did, is doing, and will do, and you will have this peace, a communal, sovereign and absolute peace, and such a peace will invade you so you will never have to correct your corruptible nature if you remain in this invasive peace. My God, what great and beautiful words these are for the reader who can grasp the meaning![2]

Chapter 102. Here Understanding of the Annihilated Soul (pity) shows what happens when evil triumphs over good

(Understanding of the Annihilated Soul): Oh my God! Am I not sufficiently imprisoned by corruption, where I ought to be, like it or not, without having to be housed in a cell of correction? Oh God, what a pity when evil triumphs over good! And so it is with the flesh and the spirit. The Spirit is created by God, and the flesh is formed by him.[1] And these two natures are joined together into corruption by nature and justice and removed from corruption by the waters of baptism.[2] These two natures are good because of divine righteousness which made them. But there is no greater sorrow than when error conquers a temperament and a creation made in God's goodness, no matter how small the fault. Then we are consumed in bitterness and arouse our adversaries to rage against us in spite of themselves.[3] This is not a small flaw, since it is not pleasing to the will of God, and he is rightly displeased.

(Knowledge of Divine Light): For God's sake, who dares call it small? I contend that whoever calls it small has never been enlightened, nor will he ever be, unless he mends his ways. But worse than that, he considers

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God's pleasure so nonchalantly. A lot could be said about the difference between this servant and the servant who serves his lord in every possible way he can to better please his master's will!

Chapter 103. Here is revealed the meaning of "the just fall seven times daily"

(Soul): Now there are some people who are helped by the scripture which says, "the just fall seven times daily."[1] But they would really be asses if they believed this had anything to do with punishment. Punishment is for those who willfully consent to fall into error; while corruption is due to the coarse complexion of our flesh.[2]

In this matter it would seem that we had no free will if we had to sin seven times daily against our will. It is not like this, thank God, for God would not be God if virtue were taken from me in spite of me. For no more could God sin--nor could he will it--than I could sin without my will's assent, for my Beloved, in his love and goodness, has given me this freedom. But if I wanted to sin would He bear it? If he didn't endure it his power would take my freedom away. And his goodness couldn't allow his power to take away my freedom in any way. This means that no power could take away my will without my will's consent. His goodness, in pure goodness, has given me a free will. In all he has given me there is nothing better; he has lent me the rest through courtesy, and if he takes it back there will be no harm. But he has freely given me a will, and he cannot take it back against my will. Such nobility has the excellence of Love given me in his goodness, that my free will can never be taken away by him against my will.

Chapter 104. Here the Soul explains how God has given her free will

(Soul): Behold how freely he has given me free will! I said earlier that he has given me nothing better, which would lead you to think that he has not given me everything, seeing that he gave me nothing but freewill and loaned me the other things. This would surely be a misunderstanding, for he has given me everything. He could not have kept anything from me, and this

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is confirmed by Love, who says this would not be a beloved love if it were so. For in giving me a free will of his pure goodness, he has given me everything my will could want. He has nothing else and I am sure of that.

(Dread): In God's name, Lady Soul, how has he given you everything?

(Soul): In that I have freely and unsparingly given him my will, without reserve, for the sake of his goodness and his single will, just as he, in his divine goodness, gave me his divine will for my profit.

Now I have said that God couldn't be God if virtue were taken from me, in spite of me. This is true. There is nothing more certain than that God is, and nothing less certain than that virtue could be removed from me against my will. This is far from what the Scriptures mean when they say "the just fall seven times daily" in things subject to punishment.

Chapter 105. The meaning of "the just fall seven times daily"

(Truth): I will explain the meaning of "the just fall seven times daily." It means when a just person completely gives up his will, without obstacle, in order to contemplate divine goodness, the body is weak and subject to error because of Adam's inherited sin. So it is often inclined to desire less than the goodness of God. Scripture calls this a "fall," and so it is. But the will of the just is wary of consenting to error which might arise from such an inclination. So if he should fall, or if the just falls by the above-said inclination, it is more a virtue than a vice for him, because his will was kept free by refusing all error, as we said. Now you can understand why the just fall so low from so high, and why their fall is more a virtue than a vice, even if they fall low.

Now listen! Since the just fall seven times daily, it is fitting that they should be raised seven times, or else they couldn't again fall seven times. He who falls often is blessed, for it means that he comes from where truly no one else can go, if he rightfully carries the name of "just." Yet those who remain there are even more blessed. But no one can continually remain among the just as long as his soul is accompanied by this wicked flesh in this world. This fall does not cause a loss of peace from guilt or conscious remorse if the Soul no longer lives by peace from the gifts bestowed upon her surpassing the Virtues--not opposing the Virtues, but

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surpassing them. If this were to be, God would be subject to his Virtues and the Virtues, which have their being in their Lord, for his profit, would oppose the Soul.

Chapter 106. How Soul declares the summary of her requests

(Soul): Now I will declare the summary of my requests. In them all my demands will be summarily satisfied. Not that I know how to ask, or what I ask or even would like to ask, for even the ranks of angels and all the saints in their ranks don't know how to ask. Thus, not even angels of the tenth state, who are in glory without being, know any more than those of the other nine orders, who know nothing.

(Reason): And do you know something about it, Lady Soul?

(Soul): Goodness, yes!

(Love): She might know something through the divine nature of the infusion of her love who informs her demands without her knowledge, even if her questions come from beyond all lands occupied by intelligent creatures.

(Soul): So what's so amazing about that? Why shouldn't there be someone other than me who would know, who is in me and like me? It is secret Love who is beyond land! There my Love is anchored apart from me. This infusion gives me her goodness which renews me continually in love. But as for what there is of her within me and for me, or concerning what I ask through the infusion of her pure nature apart from myself, I have no way of knowing, nor do those who are in glory except the One who alone is God in three persons.

(Love): But in this she has declared the summary of her requests, meaning that whoever has what she has will declare them. Truly, what she has cannot be described or imagined except by God, who is continually working in her, in his divine goodness, without the work of this Soul.

Chapter 107. Here begin Soul's requests

(Author): The first thing she asks is to always see herself--in as much as she can see anything--where she was when God made everything out of

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nothing, and thus to be certain of never being anything other than what she is now and evermore, since she has never doubted God's goodness.

(Second demand): Secondly, she would like to know what has become of her free will which God gave her. Thus she will see that she herself took away God's will, in the single moment when she consented to sin. This means that God hates all sin and whoever consents to sin takes away God's will. It's true, because such a Soul acts against God's will and is against his divine goodness.

Chapter 108. A beautiful consideration to avoid sin

(Author): Now the Soul must consider the debt from a single trespass in order to see how much she owes after two, and if these two debts have caused her fall.

(Soul's Light): Two times? Surely one could far more easily count the times I have taken a breath, than count the many times I have taken God's will from him. I have been willful for so long, and I continue to be so. As such, my will was lost until I rendered it completely naked to the One who gave it to me in his divine goodness. In fact, one may sin in doing good, knowing that he can do a bit better, and if he fails to do what is asked of him. Consider then, what you owe from one of your failings, and you will find that you owe God as much from one of your failings in equal proportion to the will you have taken from him by doing your own will. For a better understanding, consider what the will of God is. It is the entire Trinity which is one will. Thus the will of God in the Trinity is a single divine nature, and the soul owes all this to God for one single trespass.

Now we will make a comparison for those of a more primitive understanding. Let us assume that a soul who is nothing is as rich as God: if she wanted to be absolved of the debt she owed for one single trespass, and repay God no more, nor less than what she owed, she would again become nothing and would remain in nothingness, all this because she had the will to commit one fault, and in assuming she was nothing on her own and that she had the same nature as God. So then nothing would remain to sustain her, yet according to the law she could not be reduced to nothingness before being absolved of her sin, satisfying the requirements of the law.

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And if all this can be said of a single sin, what would Truth rightfully say, if she wished to speak of the other sins which are without number. She would have to speak, for she herself is right, nothing but right.

(Soul to herself): O Soul, if you possessed everything described in this book, still you would give him nothing. It would all be his as a debt without your even being absolved. So how much do I owe for all the other sins which can only be counted by Justice and Virtue? Alas! I owe so much I will be forever indebted, and without discount! In fact, I was broke even before I ever owed anything. You saw and you know it so; for God gave me my will to do his will, and thus to gain himself by himself. Alas! To my poverty I have added the great poverty of sin, but of a sin known only by Truth alone.

Chapter 109. How the Soul is amazed at not being able to sufficiently pay for her failings

(Soul): My God, my God, my God! So what am I now, for I was nothing even before I owed nothing? Who am I therefore, when I was a nothing before I owed my God anything through the work of my own will? And I would still be nothing if I had what this book describes in the comparison you have heard before I was absolved of one of my sins--just one, just one, just one! Now I possess in myself neither that nor anything else, nor could I have anything. And if I did, you saw where I would be if I were acquitted of one single sin. No, I never had anything, nor can I ever redeem myself, and no one can do anything to pay my debts. Oh Truth, please tell me who I am!

(Truth): You are nothing, and that you were even before you forfeited what I gave you. Now you are something else, for you are less than nothing by as many times as you have wanted anything other than my will.

(Soul who has erred): It's true, true beyond truth: I am nothing other than this, how well I know, and I have you to thank, Truth. I know nothing better than this. For if God had kept strictly to the law, without mercy for a single one of my sins, I should suffer no less endless torment than the extent of his power. But if you are justly Truth, if you are strict and rigorous Justice, there are also Indulgence and Mercy, your sweet

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and courteous cousins, who will defend me against you for all my debts, and in this I am content. I don't care which one of these sisters helps me, I will give her my full will, be it Justice, Mercy, Truth or Indulgence. It doesn't matter at all to me which side I am on. It is all the same to me. I am without joy and without care.

And why without joy and without care? Because they cannot augment the justice he applies to me, nor the mercy he offers me--so I have neither joy in one, nor sorrow in the other. Since my Beloved neither gains nor loses in this, it's all the same to me in the God who is One. In this matter I am one with him. Otherwise I would be two, if that made any difference to me, and then I would be with myself.

The Son of God the Father is my mirror in this,[2] for God the Father gave his Son to save us. In giving us this gift he had no other concern than our salvation, and that alone. The Son redeemed us in obedience to his Father. In so doing he had no other concern than to do the will of God, his Father, and that alone. And the Son of God is our example, so we must follow him in this regard, for we should will his divine will in all things. And thus we would be sons of God the Father in the example of Jesus Christ his son.[1]

My goodness, this is a sweet thought indeed! In doing this he has taken us into his possession, not that it would be impossible for me to sin if I wished to, but it is impossible for me to sin if I do not will to. Thus we are fulfilled in full possession of his will, if he abides in us and if we don't seek him elsewhere. He who seeks self-possession is lacking in understanding, and he lacks the art which this science offers.

Chapter 110. How a creature's art is a subtle craft found in the substance of the Soul

(The seeker): So what is art in a creature?

(Love): It is a subtle craft[1] which gives rise to understanding, giving the Soul knowledge to more perfectly understand what is said than the speaker himself who said it, however much a speaker can understand what he says. And why? The listener rests while the speaker labors; and knowledge cannot abide labor without becoming less noble.

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This art is clever, and naturally tends to achieve its goal. Its goal is nothing less than the just will of God. This subtle craft is the essence of the Soul; and knowledge is the Soul's culmination. This knowledge is the essence of understanding.

(Author): She shelters herself in a completely moral life, and so Love, who gives this state, abides in her, and she remains in nothingness, not in Love. She dwells in Love as long as she possesses herself, and as long as she remains in her self this love makes her proud and frivolous.[2] Nature accompanies this love, and there is often evidence of giving and taking in this state which makes the Soul domineering and proud. This is a state of perceptions and meditations, for it is the state of contemplation, and Thought is kept in her midst as a helper. Then she goes beyond these states and abides in nothingness, for Love abides in her, who makes her neither sad nor frivolous. Thought no longer rules her. She has not lost the use of her mind, but only the practice of using it. For Love has ravished the place it occupied in her, thus ravishing its practice, giving her peace of mind. This is the conclusion of her pilgrimage,[3] renewing the nothingness of her will which she gave up and which is then given back to her. It is the conquest of the high sea, for she lives apart from her own will, and she is in a state beyond its control. Otherwise she would again be reproached by the master who took her will from her, and she would be at war with Love, who is the Holy Spirit, reproached by the Father, and judged by the Son.

Chapter 111. The difference between the unction of peace and the war which causes reproach and guilt of conscience

(Author): There is a great difference between the unction of peace which surpasses all understanding, arising from the union of love with the Beloved in the delight of complete sufficiency, and the war caused by reproach. He who remains in willfulness often experiences such war in spite of the good works of the will. Whereas he who dwells in will-lessness,[1] where he was before he had a will, has peace. Divine goodness has nothing to reproach him for.

(Freed Soul): My Goodness, but that is well-put indeed! But my Beloved

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must do it without me, just as he created me in his divine goodness. I am indeed a soul created by him, without myself, together to do the difficult works of the Virtues, he for me and I for him, until I am again with him; but I cannot be in him unless he places me in him without myself, as it was when he, and not I, made me. He is Goodness incarnate, Who loves the goodness he created. Now Goodness incarnate never has her own free will, apart from his power, without question, not for our sake but for the sake of his goodness. Thus we have a will which emanates from his goodness beyond the reach of his power, so that we can be free, just as he has a will beyond our power, in his own right.

But divine Goodness saw that we would follow the path of pestilence and perdition in the free will he has given us, which emanates from his goodness, goodness bestowed upon us by goodness. And for this reason human nature was joined to divine goodness in the person of the Son to pay for the transgressions we transgressed with our transgressive will.

(Transgressive Will): Now I cannot be what I should be until I return to being what I was, in a condition as naked as he is who is; yes, as naked as I was before I ever was. And thus it should be, if I wish to regain what is mine, otherwise I will not have it.

(Author): Interpret the meaning[2] of this if you wish to, and if you are unable, you haven't gotten there yet, for if you had, you would be open to it.[3] If you had the wherewithal to hear, you wouldn't be so completely annihilated, and other than that, I have nothing to say. If his goodness has taken away your hearing, I won't restore it.[4]

Chapter 112. Of the eternal goodness which is eternal love

(Author): There is an eternal goodness which is eternal love, which in its natural charity, tends to give and disseminate all its goodness. This eternal goodness engenders a pleasant goodness. From this eternal goodness and this pleasant goodness comes the friendly love of the lover and the loved-one in which the loved-one continually sees her lover.

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Chapter 113. Contemplating the passion of Jesus Christ results in victory over ourselves

(Author): I make known to all who will hear this book that we should retreat as much as we can into ourselves--by thoughts of devotion, by works of perfection, by the questions of Reason--to contemplate the life Jesus Christ led and what he preached to us. He said these words: "the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and indeed will do greater works."[1] And we must do this before we have victory over ourselves. And if we do this with all our might we will end up having all this, putting outside ourselves all devotional thoughts, all works of perfection and all the demands of Reason, for we will be able to do nothing else. It is thus that the Godhead will accomplish his divine work in us, for us and without us. God is what is; that is why he is what he is through himself: lover, beloved, and love.

Chapter 114. If a human creature can remain alive and still be without herself

(Author): I ask the blind or the clarified, who see better than the blind, if a human creature can remain alive and still be "without" herself. If these two can't tell me, no one will, for no one knows who is not of the right lineage.

As for Truth, she says "yes" and Love seconds her, saying that the Annihilated Soul is "without" herself when she has no sensation at all--of nature, work, inner works, shame, honor, or of anything she fears might happen to her, or any affection for divine goodness. Nor can she have a will as long as she shelters her volition. Therefore she does everything without herself. It isn't so surprising: she is never "for" herself, for she lives from divine substance.

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Chapter 115. The eternal substance, and how Love engenders the Trinity in the Soul

(Author): It is an eternal substance, a pleasing fruition, a friendly conjunction. The Father is eternal substance; the Son is the pleasing fruition; and the Holy Spirit is the friendly conjunction, This friendly conjunction proceeds from the eternal substance and from the pleasing fruition through Divine Love.

(Soul, invaded by Divine Goodness): Yes Unity, you engender unity: Unity reflects its ardor in unity. Unity's Divine Love engenders an eternal substance, a pleasant fruition and a friendly conjunction in the Annihilated Soul, the Freed Soul, and in the Clarified Soul. From this eternal substance the memory receives the power of the Father; from this pleasing fruition the mind receives the wisdom of the Son; and from the friendly conjunction the will receives the goodness of the Holy Spirit. The goodness of the Holy Spirit conjoins in the love of the Father and the Son. This conjunction places the Soul in a state of being without being, which is Being. This Being is the Holy Spirit itself, which is the love of the Father and the Son. The love of the Holy Spirit flows into the Soul and is disseminated in abundant delight by a highly exalted gift from the sovereign Beloved in a select and majestic union, when he gives himself in simplicity and humility. And because he gives himself simply, he demonstrates that God alone is the source of all being, and that apart from God's love there is no light, union, or praise: one will, one love and one work in two natures. A single goodness in conjunction with the power of my Beloved's transforming love flows unceasingly from the dissemination of Divine Love. Divine Will uses this Divine Love in me, for me, and without my possessing it.

Chapter 116. How the Soul rejoices in the trials of her neighbors

(Author): The Soul sees in her Beloved a completely perfect love; thus she doesn't seek his help at any time; rather she assumes his interests for her own. She often rejoices in the exercise of his lordship, unaware of the trials of her neighbors, like it or not, for she knows in her spirit and knows without knowing that this is the path they must take to the door of their salvation.

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With her own light she sees the sovereign place where she is united and is thus pleased to see the pleasure of the One to whom she is united. His pleasure consists of the salvation of his creatures, and she is united to him in this will. So she rejoices in his goodness and also for the peaceful union in which his goodness has joined her, beyond the knowledge of Reason. Now when Reason perceives her rejoicing, she tells her she is committing a sin in enjoying the trials of her neighbors. Reason always judges according to what she knows, and she insists upon doing her own work. But in this case she is blind in one eye, for blaming the Soul shows that she cannot see the higher things. It can't be denied that Reason is blinded, since you cannot see the higher things unless you are an eternal being. And it is fitting that Reason cannot see, for her being must expire.

Chapter 117. How the Soul shows that she is an example of salvation for all creatures

(The highly exalted Spirit, who is no longer dominated by Reason): God has no place to put his goodness unless he places it in me. He can find no other vessel which is suitable to him. There is no other place where he can put it all except within me, and among other vessels I am an example of salvation. And there is something even greater concerning the very salvation of all creatures and the glory of God, and I will tell you how, why, and in what manner. I am the sum of all evil because I contain all that is evil in my own nature. Therefore I cam completely evil. And the One who is the sum of all goodness contains all that is good in his own nature, and is therefore completely good. Thus I am completely evil and he is completely good. But you must give alms to the poor or else you would be depriving them of what is rightfully theirs; so God cannot do wrong without renouncing himself. His goodness is mine because of my need, and he is fair with his goodness. Since I am all evil and he is all goodness, I need to have all of his goodness to staunch my evil; nothing less could rid me of my poverty. My begging could not detract from his goodness because my begging is loud and forceful,[1] and I must beg forcefully so he will give me all his goodness because I am completely evil. Anything less than the fullest abundance of his complete goodness could not fill the abyss in the depth of

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my own evil. And in this way I possess his pure goodness within, by goodness, and all I ever had from the beginning or could ever have without end, of his complete goodness. He is constantly aware of this need, and as such I have always received it, through his divine wisdom, in the pure goodness of his divine will, and in the work of his divine power. Otherwise, if he had not always done this for me, I would not exist. For this reason I can say that I am the salvation of all creatures and the glory of God; for just as Jesus Christ, by his death, redeemed the multitude in the praise of God the Father, so I, through my evil, am the salvation of humankind and the glory of God the Father.[2] God the Father gave all goodness to the Son. God's goodness was given so generations would know of Jesus Christ, who is the praise of the eternal Father, who, by his death, redeemed human creatures.

(Soul): Likewise, God the Father has given me all his goodness and has disseminated it throughout me. This goodness of God is made known to generations so they will know it through my evil. Therefore it seems that I am the eternal praise of God and the salvation of human creatures, for the salvation of any human creature consists of nothing other than the knowledge of the goodness of God. And so, since everyone will know of God's goodness through me, and his goodness gives me such goodness; it will be known to them through me; although I wouldn't have known this if it hadn't been for my evil. Thus they know of divine goodness through my evil, and their salvation consists of nothing other than knowing divine goodness. Thus I am the cause of the salvation of every creature, for God's goodness is made known through me. And since God's goodness is known by me, I am his only glory and his only praise, for his glory and his praise are nothing other than knowledge of his goodness. Our salvation rests in nothing else, not even in his complete will, which knows of his divine goodness, and I am the cause. The goodness of his pure nature is made known through the evil of my wicked nature, and I have no other reason for having his goodness, than through my own evil.

And thus I can never lose his goodness because I can never lose my evil, and he has assured me of this in his pure goodness, without any doubt. And the unique nature of my evil has thus adorned me with this gift: No good work which I or anyone else could ever do someone could provide comfort or hope. Only my evil could, of this I am certain.

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Thus you have seen—and you can see if you have a bit of light within you—how, why, and in what manner I am the salvation of every creature and the glory of God. Since I have all his goodness, I am of the same substance as he is by transformation of love, for "his power is made perfect in my weakness."[3]

This transformation is very delightful, and this is known by those who have experienced it. For even if the eye's pupil were irritated by some foreign object, be it fire, iron or stone, and it were blinded, it would not be as imperious as the will of God when we defy it and are not in conformity to it.

So now you understand how my evil results in my having his goodness because of my need, for God sometimes lets evil happen so greater good can later come from it. Anyone who has been planted in the Father has first fallen from perfection into imperfection, in order to attain a more perfect state. This wound will be healed without the wounded even being aware of it. Such people have humbled themselves and have carried the cross of Jesus in their good works, and in so doing, they bear their own cross.

Chapter 118. Of the seven states of the devout Soul which are elsewhere called "beings"

Author[1]: I have promised to say something about the seven states which follow the Soul's being overtaken by Love. We have called them "beings," for they truly are that. They are degrees through which one climbs from the valley to the top of the mountain,[2] which is so isolated that one can only see God there, and each degree has its own conditions.[3]

The first state or degree occurs when the Soul, touched by God's grace, and having shed its power of sin, has the pure motivation, even to the point of death, to keep the commandments given by God in the Law. And in this the Soul beholds and fearfully ponders how God has commanded her to love him with all her heart and her neighbor as herself. This alone seems like enough labor in view of her capacities, for it seems to her that if she were to live a thousand years, it would require all her might just to observe and keep his commandments.

(Freed Soul): I found myself in the same state in former times. But no one should fear reaching the summit, if he has a gentle heart, filled

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with noble inner courage. But a small heart doesn't aspire to do great things, and lacking in love, it will not ascend higher. Such people are cowards, and it is not surprising, for they dwell in a lassitude which prevents them from seeking God whom they'll never find unless they seek him diligently.

Author: The second degree or state is that the Soul sees that God counsels his special friends beyond his commandments; and you are not a beloved friend unless you go out of your way to accomplish everything you know can please your loved one. Thus the creature abandons herself, and endeavors, apart from the counsel of men, to perform works which mortify nature. She scorns riches, delights, and honors to accomplish perfection according to the Gospel of which Jesus Christ is the example. Thus she doesn't fear loss of possessions, human words, or bodily weakness, for her Beloved did not fear them, and any Soul overtaken by him could not do otherwise.

The third state is when the Soul considers herself in love's affection doing works of perfection, from which her spirit, in a burning desire of love, decides to multiply such works within herself. This happens through her subtle knowledge in understanding his love; a love which can only offer his beloved what he loves to comfort her. For no other gift is worthy of Love than to give the beloved what you love most.

And thus, this creature's will now loves only works of goodness in which she can appease her spirit through the discipline of hard work and toil. Consequently, it seems right for her to love nothing but works of goodness. Unless she offers this sacrifice she knows of nothing she can give to Love. To her, death would not be martyrdom unless it consisted in abstaining from the works she loves, which are the delight of her pleasure and the vitality of the will which is nurtured by them. Then she relinquishes her works which so delighted her and stifled her will which controlled this life. She forces herself into martyrdom, in obedience to the will of others, abstaining from works and desire, fulfilling the will of others to destroy her own will. This is even harder than the other two states, for it is more difficult to conquer the will controlling the deeds of the spirit than to conquer the will controlling the body, or to do the will of the spirit. Thus, to be molded, one must shatter and break oneself to enlarge the space which Love might occupy, and to attain this state of

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being, one will have to be burdened by several more states before being unburdened.

The fourth state is when the Soul is drawn by highest love into the delight and thought of meditation, relinquishing all outside work and all obedience to others through the highest contemplation. This makes the soul so fragile, noble, and delightful that she cannot bear to be touched except by the caress of Love's pure delight, which she experiences with a singular joy and delight. She becomes proud in Love's abundance through mastery of this brilliance, this clear brightness of her soul, which marvelously fills her with the love of great faith from the joint union which gave her possession of these delights.

Then the Soul assumes there to be no life higher than this, the one she has mastery of; for Love has so satisfied her with her delights that it is inconceivable that God could offer any greater gift to a human soul than this love which Love, through love, has spread within her.

Don't be surprised if the Soul is overcome, for Gracious Love has fully and powerfully inebriated her that she doesn't let the Soul understand anyone but her, because of the potency of Love's delight. So the soul doesn't prize any other state, for Love's great clarity has so dazzled her sight that she sees nothing but Love. She is deceived in this for there are two more earthly states bestowed by God which are greater and nobler than this, but Love has deceived many a soul by the sweet experience of her love which overcame the Soul as soon as she approached her. No one can prevail against such power, and this the Soul knows, whom Love has highly exalted beyond herself through Pure Love.

The fifth state is when the Soul considers God as the substance of all things, and that she herself is not the substance of anything. These two considerations wonderfully astonish her, seeing that he is complete goodness in giving her free will while she is nothing but complete evil.

Now Divine Goodness gives her free will through pure divine goodness. So she, who is nothing but evil and is therefore entirely evil, receives the free will of God's being in her entire being, this will deems that she who had no being might have the gift of his being. And so the Divine Goodness spreads, resulting from a dazzling movement of divine Light. This movement of divine Light, disseminated by light throughout the Soul, shows her will the soul's equality with what is and gives her knowledge of what isn't, in

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order to displace it[5] from where it is and should not be to replace it where it is absent, and should be, and from which it came.

Now the Will, enlightened by the infusion of divine Light (light given to the Will to bring it back to God, for it cannot return without Light) sees that it cannot profit on its own unless it separates from its own will; for its nature is evil by its natural inclination toward nothingness[6] and the will has reduced her to less than nothing. Thus the soul sees this inclination and this perdition in the nothingness of her nature and in her own will. The light shows her that the Will should will the true divine will and none other, and this will was given for this reason. This is why the Soul separates from her will and the will separates from this Soul, and is therefore given, returned and replaced in God from whom it was originally taken, without retaining anything of itself, in order to fulfill the perfect divine will. This cannot be accomplished in the Soul without this gift, except in war or defeat. This gift works perfection in her and transforms her into Love's nature which peacefully delights and nourishes her in divine pasture. And so she need no longer be wary of war in her nature, for her will has been nakedly replaced from whence it was taken and where it should be, by right. This Soul was continually at war as long as she retained this Will outside of her being.

Now this Soul is "nothing," for, by abundant divine knowledge she sees her nothingness which makes her nothing reducing her to nothing. Yet she is "all," for the deeper knowledge of her own evil, which is so profound and so immense, shows her that she will not find a beginning, middle or end, nothing but a bottomless pit.[7] There she is found, bottomless, endless and un-found.

One who is not found cannot reach himself, and the more he sees himself in the knowledge of his evil, the more he knows that he cannot truly know it, not even from the least point where this Soul is an abyss of evil--a chasm which shelters and fortifies it--like a flood of sin which contains all perdition. This is how the Soul sees herself without seeing. And what enables her to see this? It is profound humility, who reigns without pride and who sets her on the throne. Pride cannot penetrate there since she sees herself without seeing and this "non-sight" enables her to see herself perfectly.

Now this Soul is seated at the very bottom, where it is is bottomless,

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thus making it very low. And this lowliness allows her to clearly see the true Sun of highest goodness,[8] for nothing hinders her view. Divine Goodness is revealed to her in the goodness which draws, transforms and unites her, joining her goodness with pure Divine Goodness, whose mistress is Goodness. And the knowledge of these two natures we have spoken of, Divine Goodness and her own will, is the craft with which such goodness has endowed her. The Bridegroom of her youth wants only one thing, for he is One. Mercy has made peace with strict justice, which has transformed this Soul in its goodness. She is everything and nothing, for her Beloved has make her whole.

Now this Soul falls from love into nothingness, and without nothingness she could not be whole. If she has properly fallen, this fall is so deep, the Soul cannot rise from this abyss, and this she mustn't do; rather she should remain there. Here the Soul loses pride and youth, for the spirit has become old and will permit no further dalliance or frivolity. Her will has left her, which often, through feelings of love, made her proud, arrogant, and possessive in the high contemplation of the fourth state. But the fifth state put her on the spot, showing this Soul herself. Now she sees herself and knows Divine Goodness, and this knowledge makes her see herself again. These two visions deprive her of the will and desire to do good works, so she is completely at rest, in full possession of her free being, which rests in the excellent nobility of all things.

The sixth state is where the Soul no longer sees herself for whatever abyss of humility she might have. Nor does she see God, for whatever supreme goodness he might have. But God, who clarifies this Soul, sees himself through her in his divine majesty, so she sees nothing outside of God himself, who is, and from whom all things come. This is God himself, whom she sees through herself, for one who sees what is, sees only God in his divine majesty, God seeing himself through this Soul. Therefore the Soul is in the sixth state, where all things are free, pure, and clarified, but not yet glorified, for glorification comes in the seventh state, when we experience glory which is beyond human understanding. Yet this Soul, so pure and clarified, sees neither God nor herself, but God sees himself in her, for her, and without her, and God shows her that there is no one but him. And this Soul knows nothing but him, and cannot love or worship without him, for there is no one but God. For what is, comes from his

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goodness. God loves his own goodness as well as the goodness he has bestowed. This goodness is God himself, for God is not separate from his goodness for as long as it lasts. That is why God is Goodness and Goodness is God. And as such, Goodness is seen through his goodness in the divine light of the sixth state in which the Soul is clarified. And there is nothing except he who is which can be seen in such a being who has been transformed by Love's holy majesty with goodness spread about within and replaced in him. So he alone is revealed in this creature without imputing anything from the creature: Everything is his and his alone. This explains the sixth state which we have promised to describe to the listeners. It proceeds from being overcome by Love, and Love for him, in its great nobility, has paid the Soul's debt. Love keeps the seventh state to herself, in which we will be given eternal glory, and of which we will have no knowledge until our souls depart from our bodies.

Chapter 119. How the Soul who had this book written is sorry for having made it so long and wordy, which could have otherwise been short and brief to the Souls who dwell in nothingness and who have fallen through love to this state

(Soul who had this book written): O unknown ladies who have reached this state, and in so being you are not separate from the Unknown Being; you are truly unknown in the land where Reason is sovereign. To all those who dwell in nothingness and who have fallen through love to this state, I am sorry, for I have made this book too long and wordy. Compared to what you must know it must seem paltry. Yet, in your courtesy, please excuse me for necessity makes the law. I didn't know to whom I should address my understanding, which I now know to be very naive, from your peace and truth. Led by cowardice, my comprehension was given over to Reason through Love's answers to her questions; and this was accomplished through human cognition and human science. Human reason and human science know nothing of inner love, nor does inner love know anything of divine science. My heart is drawn so high and swallowed so deeply that I cannot reach it; for all that can be said, written, or even thought about God, who is beyond all words, is more like lying than any true description.

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I have said that Love had this written by human science in the hope of transforming my understanding, for I was burdened as this book demonstrates. Love did it by unburdening my spirit with the three gifts we have described. That is why I say that it is naive and paltry, however great it seemed to me when I began to ascend to this state.

Chapter 120: How Truth praises these Souls:

Truth praises such as these and says:

O emerald, jewel most precious,
True diamond, queen and empress,
You give of your noble highness,
Without asking for Love's richness,
But only the will of her divine pleasure.
This is truly just,
For on this true way,
Fine Love wills to stay.
O well-spring deeply sealed,
Where the sun is scarcely revealed,
Your rays hurled, says Truth, by holy science,
Which we know as true sapience,
And we shine though its brilliance.

(Soul): O Truth, speak not these things of me,
Never would I speak of him, but through him.
And yet it's true, and have no doubt,
In this I have never had a mother.
If you wish to know to whom I belong,
I will tell you, most courteously,
Love has taken me wholly in charge.
Thus I am void of thought and will
And Reason to do anything,
Believe this, for the sake of Love.

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Chapter 121. Holy Church praises this Soul

(Holy Church):

Courteous, highly-learned one,
how wise is what you say!
You are the true star,
which shines during the day,
And the pure and spotless sun,
without stain of impurity,
And the fullest moon,
never hidden away,
You are the King's banner,
proceeding on his way,
Your life is from the seed,
whose will has passed away,
And those who live from chaff and straw,
and forage in green hay,[1]
Who have kept the practices,
of human volition
They are slaves to the Law,
While you're above the Law,
But not against the Law.
As Truth bears witness,
She is full and fulfilled,
She has God as her will.

(Soul):

O sweet Love divine,
who abides in Trinity,
With gladness I wonder,
how they can endure,
Whom Reason and Fear rule,
with Desire, Works and Will,
Unknown to them, the high calling,
in the state of non-thinking.

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(The Holy Trinity):

O jewel from Heaven,
  says Holy Trinity,
I beg you, dear daughter,
  to let it be.
To you no cleric in this world
  has a word to say.
At my table you have sat,
  to you my mass I've given,
And how learned you've become,
  so well my mass you savor,
And my wines from brimming vats,
  in which you are fulfilled,
The scent alone inebriates,
  may it never otherwise be.
Now you've tasted of my food,
  And our wines you've savored,
None but you may speak of this,
  Nor could you, at any price,
Devote your heart to further exercise
I pray you, dear daughter,
My sister, my beloved,
For Love's sake, if you please,
Tell nothing of the secrets,
Which are known to you alone.
For others it means damnation,
While for you it is salvation,
Since Reason and Desire govern
Them with Fear and strong Volition.
Know this, O daughter I've chosen,
That to them is Heaven given.

(The Chosen Soul): Heaven? Wouldn't you grant them something else? Murderers will go to Heaven just by crying for mercy! But I wouldn't be silent just because you wished it. And that is why I will chant the verses of a song with the kind permission of Fine Love.

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Chapter 122. Where the Soul begins her song

(Soul): Behold the lofty ascension, the precious coming, and the worthy dwelling in human creation of the sweet humanity of our Saviour, the Son of God, whose humanity was ordained to possess the highest seat in Heaven by the Godhead, there at the right hand of God the Father, joined to the Son for all: for all this be exceedingly glad. Offer him prayers and thanksgivings for on that day also Fine Love departed graciously from me. From whom? From me, from my neighbors, and from the whole world, from spiritual affection and from the Virtues for whom I slaved through submitting to the power of Reason. Now I will tell you the truth of it:

So beastly was I then,
In the days I served them,
I would not have the power
To express it in my heart.
For in the time I served them,
All the more I loved them,
Joyfully Love bade me
Listen to her words.
And none the less, more simply than I'd own,
And so much more so than I'd ever known,
She seized my will, that I'd love her alone.

And when Love saw that my thoughts were on her because of the Virtues, she did not refuse me, but rather she drew me from their paltry service and led me to the divine school, and kept me, doing no service there, and it was there that I was filled and satiated with her.

Thinking no more has worth
Nor works nor eloquence
Love has drawn me so high
Thinking no more has worth.
From his divine regard,
I have no more desires
Thinking no more has worth
Nor works nor eloquence.

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By Love's great nobility,
I've found the verse of my song.
It tells of the Godhead pure,
For which Reason has no word,
And of my Lover,
Who has no mother,
Proceeding rather
From God the Father,
And from God the Son.
Holy Spirit he is called,
In union my heart is enthralled,
His joy does my life contain,
While I pasture in the terrain,
Where Love feeds the Beloved.
From him I wish nothing:
It would be a great wrong,
Rather I put my trust,
In the love of my Beloved.

O my Love of such gentle nature,
You are worthy of great praise.
Generous and kind beyond measure,
The summit of all good grace.
There's nothing you would do,
Love, which is not in my will.
And thus I must not silence,
Your beauty and goodness,
For me you are strong and wise,
And this I cannot hide.
But oh, to whom may I tell this?
Even Seraphim are mute to speech.

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Beloved, you possessed me in your love,
To bestow upon me your great treasure,
It is to know the gift of yourself,
Who is divine goodness.
If no heart can express it,
A will-less one may guess it,
Who made me ascend on high
Into that peaceful union,
Which I may never reveal.

I once was a slave, locked up in a prison
Where Desire enclosed me for want of affection,
There I found a light burning with Godly devotion,
Which quickly slew my desire, will, and affection,
Which had kept me from being overtaken,
By the fullness of Godly devotion.

Yet divine light delivered me from prison,
And joined me nobly to Divine Love's volition,
Where the Trinity makes me enjoy her devotion.
No one knows of this gift,
As long as he serves any Virtue,
Or feels through Nature,
Or acts through Reason.

Beloved, what will the beguines[1]
and the pious people say,
When they hear the excellence
of your divine song?
The beguines say I err,
so priests, clerics, and preachers,
Augustines, carmelites,
and friars too,
Because I write of the state
of perfected Love,
Without keeping their Reason
which makes them speak thus to me.

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Desire, Will and Fear,
  have surely taken their knowledge,
Of the richness in that union
  of the highest light
Of God's burning love.
Truth tells my heart,
That I am loved by One,
And says there is no return
Of the love he's given me.
This gift has slain my thought,
By delighting in his Love,
Delights which exalt and transform me,
In union with the eternal joy
Of the state of Divine Love.

Divine Love tells me
  she has entered into me,
And there she can do
  whatever she pleases.
The power she has given me
  is from the Beloved I love,
To whom I am betrothed.
He wants me to love him,
  So I will love him.

I've said I will love him:
I'm lying, for I do not
For he alone loves me:
He is, and I am naught.
I need nothing
Save what he wills,
And what he values.
He is fullness,
And I am filled
That is the divine heart
Of faithful love.

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The following are some considerations for those in an errant state who ask the way to the land of the free

Chapter 123. The first consideration is from the apostles

I would like to address some considerations to the errant who ask the way to the land of the free. These thoughts helped me greatly when I was erring, when I still drank milk and pablum and was foolish.[2] These considerations helped me to endure and persevere when I had strayed from the path, and they indeed may be a help in finding the way, for by questioning we go far, and by questioning we find our way and get back on the path where we left it.

I began by asking myself why Jesus Christ said to his apostles: "it is necessary that I go away, for if I do not go away," he says, "you will not receive the Holy Spirit."[3] Then I sought out the Law which said that Jesus Christ told them this because they loved him too tenderly according to human nature, and too weakly by divine nature. That is why he said, "It is necessary that I go away." It was grievous for them to hear this, but in their grief they could reflect on their love to decide if it was natural and not divine. The truth in hearing this was not grievous or strange, but their interpretation was troubled, and that is proper since their love was unrefined. Yet they nevertheless possessed the sweet grace of God, for that love is not separate from God's grace—rather, they possessed it in his grace—yet their love stifled the gifts of the Holy Spirit[4] which cannot tolerate anything but Divine Love, without mixing their natures.

Chapter 124. The second consideration is of Mary Magdalene

And then, I considered the sweet Magdalene, and how she prepared for the arrival of her guest, Jesus Christ, who was often at her home in the company of his Apostles. It wasn't for nothing that he came, yet Mary did not then tend to his needs. And assuming that our Lord Jesus Christ often returned footsore, with his holy head bent in fatigue, and that he was famished, exhausted and continually rejected, for he could find no one to

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feed him or quench his thirst. Magdalene knew all this, yet she did nothing for his physical needs. She was motionless and left it to her sister, Martha, to serve him, for that was her part. But to love him, she left to no one but herself.

I also considered Mary when she sought our Lord Jesus Christ at the tomb.[1] She didn't find him, but she found two angels who spoke to her and tried to comfort her. But Mary would not be comforted, not even by the shade the two angels offered her. For Mary sought the true Sun who created the angels, and that is why the two angels couldn't comfort her.

O Mary, how desperately you searched when you loved humanly by the tender affection which had overtaken your spirit, and how beloved you were when you stopped searching, and were united in Divine Love, without the affection of your spirit!

After this I considered how Mary labored on the land which her Savior had left her.[2] She sowed fine unmixed wheat, and the wheat was joined to her toil and later produce a hundred-fold yield, but not until after Mary had done what she could and should do. And when she had done what she could and should of what God had asked her to do, Mary then rested and did no more work, and God gently became a part of Mary, for Mary and without Mary. For Mary had done her part; she was no longer concerned with it, but with the Master who had given her the land to till.

Now I will explain for the children, and not for the wise, how this was done: When a man has land from which he must earn his living by necessity, he toils, tills, and hoes this land in the most worthwhile manner he knows, to yield the wheat which is seed for sowing and wheat for sustaining the laborer who planted the seed.[3] These two things must be done in order for the man's land to produce fruit for living. But after the wise farmer has tilled, hoed, and planted the wheat in the ground, his own power can no longer help him. Rather he must let God do the rest if he wants to enjoy the fruit of his labor, for on his own he can do nothing. You can see this by common sense. Now, should the wheat spoil in the field, thus producing no new seed, the farmer would have no recourse, no matter how much he has toiled. Whether the seed spoils or produces a great hundred-fold yield is known only by God, who alone does this work after the laborer has done his part, and not sooner.

What I am saying is also true of Mary. The land which she worked was

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her own body, which she distressed with impetuousity and marvelous works of ardent desire. She raced across her land, cultivating it with good works, for that was the only way she knew her land would be worthy enough to yield the true seed of God's grace. For a single good work will not engender the virtues, but numerous works will guarantee them, and virtues perfect the works. This is why Mary had to perform numerous works before the virtues were perfected in her.

Now you have heard how Mary labored and toiled the land God had given her to work. Next I will tell you about the fine unmixed wheat Mary sowed in her labor. This truly represents her pure intention in addressing God. This was her intention in everything she did, for her affection was always for God. For his love she tilled and sowed the land he had given her to work. This toil was hers through sin by omission, and through it, her rough edges could be smoothed.

Now you may be wondering how a soul's good works can truly be considered sin by omission. This was not always and everywhere the case for her. If this work were done in Jesus Christ it would have been human failing, while if it is done in ourselves, it is truly through our own sin, even if the blind may call this a life of perfection, so-named for those who do not see and who could not really understand. But those who have two eyes call it a "sin by omission," and that, without doubt, is what it is, for while it is fitting for a child to do childish work before becoming a perfect man, it is also fitting for a man to do foolish and frivolous human work before attaining the true heart of the state of liberty where the soul works at holy practices and does no work on his own. And this divine practice arrests and prevents us, certainly through guilt, from doing either good or evil works.

Now you have heard that good works are sin by omission, and I will tell you why. It is because the "least" takes the place of the "most," and the least is appropriate to our state of sin, and this "least" causes us to lose our noble, divine being. Since we have good works within us, which comprise the "least," it follows that we cannot have the noble divine being, for they cannot abide together. Divinity is too great to abide with a strange guest. But Mary had to labor because of the sin we spoke of. She so ardently did good works; so loaded and burdened herself so heavily with them that this burden truly unburdened her of herself. Mary toiled and sowed her land; the

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toil represents the difficult works of perfection, and the sowing represents the pure intention. We must accomplish these two works because of our sin, yet our labor cannot make further headway, so God must do the rest, and he does so, as is clearly seen in Mary's case. After her toil, Mary was unburdened of herself, after having done her utmost. So it was up to God to do the remainder, without her, for her and in her, because she had done what she had to do. She left herself completely at God's disposal after she had done her part. And we should do likewise. But the extent to which her toil and labor were profitable to her, and why she led this life which had a hundred-fold yield, is known only to God, who alone made it multiply. He accomplished this work for Mary in the desert when she rested from him, and not when Mary was running from herself and seeking him. He did it when divine goodness rested in Mary, and when Mary rested from him, without Mary and for Mary.

Thus Mary lived from a new fruit which came exclusively from God's work. Thus she took on the labor, assumed the toil and the sowing, but not the fruit, and she reached the fullness of her state not through speaking and searching, but when she was silent and still.

Chapter 125. The third consideration concerning St. John the Baptist

Next I considered the greatest saint, that is, the very dear John the Baptist, who, even though he was sanctified in his mother's womb, this didn't matter to him. And I considered him with amazement, because he pointed Jesus Christ out to his disciples so they would follow him, while he, himself, remained silent.[1] We don't find St. John leaving the desert to see Jesus Christ in his humanity. He was content with his own condition, without seeking him. Divine goodness performed works in him, and that satisfied him without compelling him to seek out the human person of Jesus.

And after that I considered when Jesus Christ went to see him in the desert, and how he refrained from detaining Jesus Christ in his human form or from following him. Next I considered when he preached about our Lord Jesus Christ. They say that Jesus sat with interest to hear the sermon of the very dear Baptist, but he did not break his concentration, any more than he did earlier, for divinity so occupied his thought.

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After that I considered when he baptized Jesus Christ, and in doing so he held the Son of God, and heard the voice of the Father and saw the Holy Spirit. Did he disclose this to anyone? Did he try to hide it? Was he proud? Not at all. His only concern was to please the One, who, in his goodness, did this work.

Chapter 126. The fourth consideration is of the Virgin Mary

Then I considered the sweet Virgin Mary, who was so perfectly sanctified.[1] Did she show, reveal or hide anything from anyone? No, to no one! She wasn't concerned about such great work; it wasn't important to her.

After that I considered the matter of her virginity, but I suppose that if the whole world depended upon this condition to be saved, she would never consent to a single thought of leaving her state of virginity, since Jesus Christ, in his goodness would accomplish salvation through his death.

Then I considered when she conceived the Son of God by virtue of the Holy Spirit.[2] I truly believe that in that hour she had more knowledge, love, and praise for the whole Trinity than all those souls, who, apart from her, are in glory. And my Lady, why not? I believe that the good Baptist is nothing but a thorny fish[3] compared to you, Lady, who are a whale. Yet from his mother's womb[4] he was more perfectly filled with divine light than all the twelve apostles on the day of Pentecost, when they received the abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit.[5] And you, favored Lady, you needed all these gifts, for I believe that if the Son of God had found as much cunning in you as there is in the weight of a tiny useless worm;[6] he would never have made you his mother. Lady, only you could have done it, and if it weren't for you it wouldn't have been done.

And then I considered this Lady at the cross, beholding the death of her Son, seeing him completely naked when the Jews crucified him. Oh what sorrow! Who better than her knew of Jesus' righteousness? Didn't she know that they wrongly made him die? Wasn't she the mother of all this knowledge? What harm, dear Lady, did you wish them in your thoughts for what they did? What did you say to them about their cruelty? And what works did they do to compensate for what they made you forfeit? For truly,

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sweet Lady, you would have given up your own life in that very hour, if it had been necessary for God to forgive them their sin. But it wasn't necessary since Jesus Christ accomplished this reconciliation so abundantly and agonizingly that he sufficed for all. And why so abundantly? For even what little of his sacred blood as you could put on the point of a needle; that would be enough to redeem a hundred thousand worlds, if they existed. Yet he gave his blood in such abundance there was none left. This consideration made me depart myself and led me to live in divine pleasure. I also said this reconciliation was agonizing. Why, then, the anguish? For this reason: I affirm that if all the pain from death or other torments that ever was, is, or ever will be, from Adam to the time of the Antichrist; if all this pain were gathered together as one, truly that would be but a pinprick, compared to what Jesus Christ suffered from the sword when his precious and worthy body was stabbed, and that because of his own sensitivity, refinement, tenderness, and purity.

Chapter 127. The fifth consideration is how divine nature is joined to human nature in the person of the Son

After this I considered how the divine nature is joined for us to human nature in the person of God the Son. Great God! Who could possibly imagine that? Who would be so bold as to dare question whether his own goodness had done it? It is not surprising that Jesus was poor, scorned, and tortured for us. He couldn't restrain himself in view of the excess of his love for us, and he could do this because he was human. But to say that divine nature was joined to human nature in the person of the Son, who would dare ask such an outrage? In this we have enough to ponder to be unburdened of ourselves forevermore, if we are willing to let righteousness work in us. Alas! Why didn't I let its work be done in me? If I had let it do what it pleased, I would have been free from the very moment I thought it, but I didn't want to relive the hideousness of my loss. My thoughts have caused me to take many foolish steps. I thought I'd find righteousness through my works, but instead, I only lost it.

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Chapter 128. The sixth consideration is how the humanitiy of the Son of God was tortured for us

After this I considered how the One who was both God and man was shamefully despised on earth for me; the great poverty he experienced for me, and the cruel death he suffered for me. These three feats and points contain, beyond comprehension, all that he did. O Truth, Way, and Life,[1] what do we know of you? It is greater to wrap our hearts in your love, pondering one single kindness you have done for us, than it would be to set the whole world; Heaven and earth, on fire to destroy a single body.

And then I considered purity of Truth, and she told me that I would not see the Holy Trinity before my soul was as free as Jesus of the stain of sin. His soul was glorified the very moment it was created in the Holy Trinity, joining his mortal body to his divine nature in the person of the Son. In the moment the Soul was created and joined to these two natures, she was as perfect as she is now. It cannot be otherwise, since his Soul was joined to divine nature, and his body, being mortal, could not have prevented it.

Then I asked who ascended to Heaven. And Truth told me "No one has ascended except the one who descended, the Son of God."[2] This means that only those who are sons of God can ascend by divine grace. That is why Jesus Christ himself said, "The one who does the will of God, my Father, is my brother, my sister and my mother."[3]

Chapter 129. The seventh consideration is of the Seraphim, and how they are united to divine will

I then considered the Seraphim and then asked if Charity did any works in the mystery of Jesus Christ's incarnation into humanity; and what was created by the Holy Trinity; and what, in her goodness for the creatures, Charity will eternally do for them. And Love told me there would be only one thing, and that is to do the divine desire and will of the whole Trinity. This is a sweet and profitable consideration by which we can unburden ourselves to approach the state where we should be.

Now we have seven considerations which are beneficial for the errant.

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The first is of the Apostles, the second of Magdalene. The third of the Baptist. The fourth of the Virgin Mary. The fifth, how divine nature is joined to human nature in the person of the Son. The sixth consideration, how his humanity was tortured for us. The seventh is of the Seraphim, how they are one with divine will.

Chapter 130. Here the Soul speaks of three beautiful thoughts and considerations and how she knows less about power, wisdom, and divine goodness than she knows of her weakness, stupidity, and wickedness.

And now I will tell you of my considerations on the life we spoke of earlier, that is, the errant life, and about the time when I could neither bear nor contain myself.

First, I considered myself; and then I considered God, and I considered myself as if I wanted great expectations for him; and I rejoice and am glad for these three things above all others, and these three considerations gave me a way to endure and contain myself.

Then, I reflected and said, "Lord God, I don't know where you come from, for that is known only by your divine and everlasting power. Lord, I don't know what you are, for this is known only by your holy and everlasting wisdom. Lord, I don't know who you are, for this is known only by your holy and everlasting goodness."

Likewise, I said to myself, "I don't know where I come from: this is known only by your power. I don't know what I am; this is known by your wisdom. I don't know who I am; this is known by your goodness."

Then I said, "Lord, I don't know where you come from, for I know nothing of your everlasting power. I don't know what you are because I know nothing of your everlasting wisdom. I don't know who you are, because I know nothing of your everlasting goodness."

Likewise, also of myself: "Lord, I don't know where I come from, for I know nothing of my extreme weakness, my extreme stupidity. Lord, I don't know who I am, for I know nothing of my extreme wickedness.

"Lord, you are good, for goodness permeates you entirely, and I am wicked because wickedness permeates me entirely.

"Lord, you are, and for this everything is perfected in you, and

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nothing is done without you.[1] And I am nothing, because everything is done without me and nothing is done by me.

"Lord, you are all powerful, all knowing, and all goodness, without beginning, without understanding, and without end. And I am all weakness, all stupidity, and all wickedness, without beginning, without understanding, and without end.

"Lord, you are one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but I am one enemy in three-fold malice: that is weakness, stupidity, and wickedness.

"What do I know, Lord, of your power, wisdom, or goodness? As much as I understand of my own weakness, stupidity, and wickedness.

"Lord, how much do I know of my own weakness, stupidity, and wickedness? As much as I understand of your power, wisdom, and goodness. And if I could understand one of these two natures, I could understand both of them. For, if I could understand your goodness I would understand my wickedness, and if I could understand my wickedness I would understand your goodness. One is the measure of the other. And because I know nothing of my wickedness compared to what it is, I know nothing of your goodness compared to what it is. And what little I know of your goodness, Lord, is given by the knowledge of my wickedness. And what little I know of my evil, Lord, comes from the knowledge I have of your goodness. And truly Lord, it is still so little that one could better say that it is nothing, rather than something compared to the rest. And that is why you are all. Your Truth grants me that much of you, and thus I know it."

Chapter 131. Here the Soul says that she wants only the will of God

So then I considered in my wickedness and in his goodness something I could do to reconcile myself to him, and I began to meditate upon making my will consent through unrestrained speculations.[1] And then I said that if it were possible that I never was, so that I never would have done anything against his will, if such were his pleasure, that would be my pleasure.

Then I told him that if it were possible that I could have lived in his time, and could have done so faultlessly, suffering then as much poverty, scorn and torment as he possesses goodness, wisdom, and power--in such a

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way, however, that I had never thwarted his will; if all this were his good pleasure, then it would be my pleasure, if it pleased him.

And then later I said that if it were possible for me to return to the nothingness from whence I came so he could punish me, I would gladly do so, if it pleased him.

And then again I said that if I could be as worthy as him, to the extent that no one could remove or diminish me in anything against my own will, I would pour it all back into him, returning to nothingness, rather than having or wanting to keep anything that came from him. And if I could be what I just mentioned, I would neither do, nor want to do anything else.

And moreover, I said, that if, in my own right, I could be all that I just mentioned; that is, be as worthy as he is, I'd prefer that it would all become nothing without recovery than have it taken from him,[1] and if he tormented me with all his might, I would much prefer these torments--if they came from him--to all the eternal glory I could have on my own.

And then in my speculation, I said that henceforth, rather than do anything to displease him, I'd prefer that Jesus Christ's humanity would again suffer the torment he suffered for me--if that were possible--than to displease him myself.

Then I said, if what I know is true, if, by trespassing against his will, everything he created from nothing--including me, all things, and everyone--must become nothing, I'd rather not trespass or wish to do anything against his will.

After this I said that if, in trespassing against his will, I must suffer endless torment in equal proportion to his goodness, I would suffer it eternally rather than do anything I knew could be displeasing to his will.

And then again I told him, if he could and would give me goodness equal to his eternal worth, I would not want it without him. Even if I lost such a gift--for without him, it wouldn't matter--and if he replaced it after its loss, apart from him, I would not take it back. And if, it were more pleasing to him for me to be nothing and no longer exist and have his gift, I would then rather keep it.

And if it were possible for me to have in my power what he has in his power, and if, like him, I could lack in nothing I would want; yet knowing it would please him more for me to suffer torments equal to his goodness, I would prefer to remain in torment.

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Furthermore, I said that if I knew it were possible that the sweet humanity of Jesus Christ, the Virgin, and all the company of heaven could not bear me to suffer such everlasting torment and never recover the state I lost; and if God were to shower them with this pity and volition, and were to say to me, "If you wish I will return you what you lost by my will, and I will remove this torment from you because my heavenly host wants it, but were it not for their will, I would not return it to you, and you would be in eternal torment. But I return this gift to you, if you want it, because of their love," I would rather trespass endlessly and remain in torment than take it. For it would not be of his own volition, but from the prayers of Jesus Christ's humanity, from the Virgin Mary, and from the saints. I could not bear to have this gift, if it were not from his pure love for me, from his pure goodness and from the single will that binds the lover and the beloved.

And then I was thinking and I wondered: suppose he asked me how I would behave if I knew I could please him more by loving another more than him? And then my mind failed me, for I didn't know how to respond, or what to think, or how to reply, and I answered that I would seek counsel.

And then I wondered how I would behave if it were possible for him to love anyone else but me. And again my mind failed me, for I didn't know how to respond, or what I should think, or how to reply.

Moreover, I wondered what I would do and how I would behave if it were possible that he could want me to love another more than I loved him. And likewise, my mind failed me, and I didn't know how to respond any more than I did earlier, but I still said that I would seek counsel, and so I did, seeking counsel from him. And I told him these three thing were very difficult compared to former things. In my confusion, I asked him,

1) how I could possibly love another more than him,

2) how he could possibly love another more than me,

3) how another could possibly love me more than him. For I was faltering and couldn't answer any of these three things. I could neither deny nor reply to them.

Yet each time he chided me for trying to reply.[3] And I was so comforted and was so happy to be "with" him that I couldn't contain myself, nor could I find a way to do so. He held me fast and I couldn't wiggle[3] away. No one knows what this is like if they haven't experienced it. I

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could not, however, be content until he had my response. I was so happy to be "with" him, yet I couldn't respond carelessly. If I hadn't loved being with him so much my answer would have been short and sweet.[4] Yet I had to answer him or else I would lose both him and myself, and my heart suffered great distress over this.

Now I will tell you my answer. I told him he wanted to test me in all things. Alas! What am I saying? Of course I didn't utter a word! Only my heart was engaged in this battle with him and, in death's throes it replied that it wanted to retreat from his love in which it had lived, believing it would remain much longer than this in his love. Under the assumption that my heart could want this, and since it should want to do his will, I answered him in the following way:

(Response to the three previous questions): "Lord, if it is possible that the aforesaid things in question must be eternally realized in works as well as in questions, I will explain what I want of you for the sake of your love. If I, as you created me, Lord, were the same as you, then I would be your equal, except in one respect, that I can change my will to that of another--this you cannot do. If you would want to grant me these three things unconditionally, which have been so hard for me to bear, and if I knew without doubt that it was your will, without diminishing your goodness, I too would will it, never wanting anything else. And thus, Lord, my volition sums it up with this saying: my will is a martyr, my love is a martyr, and you have led them to martyrdom. Their thought is completely exhausted. My heart used to think it could always live in love through desire and goodwill. But now they are both finished in me, and I have left my childhood behind.

Chapter 132. How Justice, Mercy, and Love come to the Soul when she has left her childhood behind

Then the Land of Freedom appeared, and Justice came to me and asked me what favor she could do me. And I replied that such as I was, I wanted no favor, neither from her nor from whatever might torment me. After that came Mercy, who asked me how she might help me. And I quickly replied, that such as I was, I wanted no help either from her or from whatever good she could do me.

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Following them, Love came to me, full of goodness, she who had so often driven me out of my mind, and who finally brought me to death--you have already heard about that--and she said to me:

My beloved, what do you want from me?
I contain all that was
And which is, and will be,
I am filled with everything.
Take from me all you please:
If you want my all, I won't object.
Tell me, beloved, what you want from me?
I am Love, who is filled with all goodness,
What you want, we want.
Beloved, simply tell us your will!

Then I quickly replied that I was pure nothingness. Alas! What would I want? Pure nothingness has never had a will! And I want nothing. Love's goodness means nothing to me, and all that she has means nothing to me. She is truly filled with herself; there is nothing that doesn't come from her, and thus I say I am totally satisfied and that is enough for me!

Then I began to emerge from childhood, and my spirit began to age when my will died and when my works were finished, and my Love thus made me happy. The expansion of Divine Love which appeared to me in a high, piercing flash of divine light suddenly revealed both he and myself to me. He was so high and I was so low that I couldn't get up or help myself, and that was the best part. If you don't understand, I don't know how else to explain it. This work is a miracle about which nothing can be said without lying.

Chapter 133. Here the Soul says that the above considerations are for the errant, and again shows who they are, and how these considerations are of the life of the spirit

(Soul): Now you have heard some considerations which I contemplated to unburden myself and to find the way. I contemplated this when I was errant,

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meaning when I was disturbed, for the errant are those who are spiritually ailing. And this concerns the spiritual life and the tender affections of love which the Soul carries in herself. She thinks she is loving God with this strong attraction, but it is really herself she loves, without knowing or perceiving it. All those who love are deceived by this tender affection which is beyond their awareness. That is why they remain like children, doing childish works, and they will do so as long as they have a spiritual ailment.

(Divine Love who rests from herself in the Annihilated Soul): Goodness, it is indeed a long way and a great distance from the errant life to the life of freedom where Non-will is lord. And this Non-will sows divine seed, taken from divine will. Such seed can never fail, but very few people are disposed to receive such seed. I have found many who are perishing from spiritual affection through virtuous works and desiring goodwill, but I have found few who are nobly errant, and doubtless I will find even fewer of those who are free, those who lead a free life, such as this book recommends; in other words, that they have the single will offered by Fine Love. Indeed, Fine Love engenders one love and one will, and that is why my will has become a Non-will. And this Love is the finest to come from divine work.

This Soul is bare, and in her nakedness she is not wary of the snake who might bite her.[1] Since God cannot increase his own joy, this Soul's joy cannot move or increase through her own work. God must do it on his own. If she wavered from his work she would be for herself. Because she is bare this cannot be. Since her goodness cannot be diminished, affliction cannot increase in her through her work; and if she doesn't increase in her own work, it is because she would then be for herself. As long as she is naked, this cannot be.

(Free Soul): It's true. In this respect I have completely relinquished myself. Miracles come from Faith, and miracles have given me true knowledge of divine grace. Faith is the cause.

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Chapter 134. How the Soul is in a state of perfection when Holy Church cannot use her life as an example

(Love): Such a Soul is in a state of greatest perfection and much closer to Far-Near when Holy Church cannot use her life as an example. She is beneath the work of Humility, beyond the work of Poverty and above the work of Charity. She is so far removed from deeds of Virtue she can no longer understand their language. But the Virtues' work is completely wrapped within this Soul, and they obey her without contradiction. And because Holy Church is not aware of this enclosure, she praises only the Fear of God, for the holy Fear of God is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In any case, the Fear of God would destroy this state of freedom if it could penetrate it.

But perfect freedom does not question.[1] She has passed the sword's point[2] by slaying the pleasures of the flesh and in killing the volition of the spirit. She has set all her love underfoot and nothing matters to her any more than if she were nothing. The "most" has freed her of the debts she owed Jesus Christ.[3] She owed him nothing, however much she was obliged to him. The "most" shows her how he has forgiven her "least." But she wants to fully possess the "most" without any intermediary. Yet the great sensations of Nature, which deceived the errant into war within themselves, through spiritual afflictions, take this abyss from them. That is, they can no longer understand the nakedness of this chasm nor feel the generosity of God's goodness for them. And that is why they remain in works.

Chapter 135. How they are deceived, those who think it enough to be guided by the life of the spirit's affections

Oh how deceived are they who are content with that! For all the good works a creature can do are nothing compared to divine wisdom; and yet divine wisdom gives its goodness to the soul only for the sake of its own goodness, and a single revelation of supreme eternal goodness is worth more than a hundred thousand years of creaturely deeds, more indeed than even the whole Church can accomplish. The "far-ness" of this goodness is really a "near-ness" for this Soul, for she knows she has Far-Near within her, who

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continues to work within her in union with her will, without fear of what might befall her. It is all the same to her, without any "whys," and she is nothing in this "all." Thus she has nothing to do with God, any more than God had to do with her. Why? Because he is, while she is not; and in her nothingness she needs nothing, for it is enough that he is and she is not. Thus she is unburdened of all things, for she is again without being just as it was before she was. So what she possesses she receives from God, and she is what God is because of Love's transformation which changes her and brings her back to what she was before she partook of God's goodness.

Chapter 136. How all work is forbidden to the annihilated Soul

There she prays no more than she did before she existed.[1] She receives what divine goodness she has from the heart of his love, from noble Far-Near. She is concerned with nothing, for what she loves most is also what she hates most: that's the way she is. There is no plus, equal or minus to her love, and that is why she is not saddened by anything that befalls her. She is a bottomless pit and she has no place of her own. So if she has no place of her own, she also has no self-love. Every word, every work is forbidden in the simple Being of the Godhead as was originally commanded by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. To this end, she has nothing with which to do good, and it follows that she has nothing with which to do evil; for Love gives her everything and even acquits her of doing for her neighbors.

"It is right," she says, "that all things are in submission to me: since all things were made for me, I take it all as mine, without challenge. And why not? You loved, love, and will love me with all your power as a Father. You loved, love, and will love me with all your wisdom as a brother. You loved, love, and will love me with all your goodness as Beloved. There never was, dear Father, Son, and Beloved, nor will there ever be a time, when I have not been loved in this way by you. And thus I can say that you love no one more than me! For just as your goodness could not bear for your humanity, or that of your mother, the angels or saints to be deprived of the glory of your eternal goodness; no more could your goodness bear for me to have the pain and torment I deserve.[2] Thus I am constantly receiving your mercy in like measure to your power in all I must endure."

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Chapter 137. How this Soul is professed in her religion and how well she has kept the rule

This Soul is professed in her religion and is practicing its rule. And what is this rule? To be led by annihilation, back to her prior state where Love received her. Indeed, she has passed her probation examination, having won the wars which set her against her own powers. But she of whom we were speaking was too strong for her; and that is not surprising, for no war is more serious than the war waged against one's friends, and the victor must pass by sword's point.[1] Here the soul's power is removed without compensation, yet here also all her infirmities are healed.[2]
Oh what a great pity it is to massacre the friends who helped the Soul conquer her enemies, only to have them all put to death in the end! Yet is this so surprising? God accomplishes his goodness in his own way, and that is why this Soul no longer wishes to be in this place. Her beliefs used to be beyond belief, putting her in God's place, but that was because she was far from her own being.

Chapter 138. How the Soul returns to her former state

Thus the Soul is in the first state which is her proper state, and she has left three behind and has made one out of two.[1] But when does this one state exist? The "one" is when the Soul is again placed in the simple Godhead, which is a simple Being of overflowing bounty, in complete knowledge, without emotion, beyond thought. Charity works in this Soul's simple being in everything she does, for her will has become simple. A simple will does not act on its own, since it has already conquered the necessity of two natures at the time when the Soul was given the will for the simple state.[2] This simple will, which is divine will, places the Soul in divine being; she can go no higher, nor descend any lower, nor become any less human. Whoever wishes to fathom this must beware of Nature's wiles, for as subtly as the sun draws water from a sheet--which no one notices even if they are watching--Nature, by the same token, can be very deceptive unless experience has taught you to be careful.

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Chapter 139. How Nature is subtle in various ways

My Goodness! How subtle is Nature in her various ways of insisting, under the cover of goodness, or under the color of necessity, upon having what she has no right to have. Indeed, what she asks for is often threatening, for through her wiles she often receives what is not her own, robbing herself of her strength, vigor and gentleness. I have often experienced this, to my great misfortune, or rather to my great good fortune, in unwittingly giving over to divine wisdom what was mine to do. This divine wisdom and this restfulness barred the way to my own land, covering me with dignity, when I should be taking on humility to find my own way.[1] And then I lost what was mine, what I possessed, but which was never really mine.

In a kingdom it is rare to find two like-mined creatures. But if, by chance, two such creatures do find one another, they will open up to one another and not be able to conceal it. If they wished to hide it they couldn't because of their states of mind and temperaments, and because of the stations in life to which they are called, like it or not. Such people must be very careful if they have not yet attained the crowning perfection of freedom.

This is why I say, in conclusion, that if God has given you his high creation, his excellent light and his exceptional love, be fruitful and multiply this creation without fail,[2] for his two eyes regard you unceasingly, and if you consider and regard it well, this regard makes the Soul simple.[3]

Deo gracias

EXPLICIT

For the writer of this book,
I beg you, from the bottom of my heart,
Pray the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
Pray also the Virgin Mary,
That after this present life,
In the company of angels,
She will give thanks and praise.
Amen.

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Notes

(The numbers to the left refer to chapter and note number)

a. The **approbatio** was placed at the beginning of the ME edition and at the end of the Guarnieri edition. Because of its introductory tone it is placed at the beginning here. It may have been written as a preface to another edition of the **Mirror**.

b. The numbering of the chapters conforms to Guarnieri's adapted numeration. The Prologue is thus assimilated as Chapter 1.

1:1 "adnienti," annihilated or reduced to nothingness.

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Notes

(The numbers to the left refer to chapter and note number)

1:1 "adnienti," annihilated or reduced to nothingness.

1:2 "mis son voille," play on words, can mean "sail" or "will."

1:3 The allegory which follows introduces the theme of Far-Near which is essential to the **Mirror**. The legend of Alexander the Great is embellished with the chivalric virtues of **courtoisie, largesse, layouté,** and **franchise**, and was already an important theme of courtly literature in France. Although Alexander was a pagan hero he caught the imagination of the troubadour poet Albéric de Pisançon around 1100 and was the hero of Alexandre de Bernay's **Roman d'Alexander** to which the **Mirror** seems to be referring (Keen, 107-8). Cf. introd. 19-20.

1:4 "usages," meaning practices, habits, or customs.

1:5 "les petis," meaning the uninitiated, the unlearned ones.

1:6 "sept estres de noble estre." Variously referred to as states or stages of being (**estaz**), this theme will be further developed in ch. 118 "Des sept estaz de l'Ame devote, qui aultrement s'appellent estres," and is a central theme developed by Marguerite to demonstrate how the soul evolves into the likeness of God. We find similar treatments of this theme in other spiritual texts, in St. Augustine's **Ways to Love**, in Bernard de Clairvaux's commentaries on the **Song of Songs**, in Beatrijs of Nazareth's **Seven Manners of Loving** and later in Ruusbroec's **Seven Enclosures** and Walter Hilton's **Ladder of Perfection.**

3:1 Cf. Mk. 12:30-31; Lk. 10:27.

3:2 Cf. Mt. 19:20-21; Mk. 10:20-21; Lk. 18:21-22.

4:1 The chapter parodies 1 Cor. 13:4-7.

5:1 Marguerite conceives an angelic hierarchy in the tradition of the **Celestial Hierarchies** of Dionysius the Areopagite of the 5th century, who divided the anglelic host into three hierarchies and nine orders. In the highest order are the Seraphim, six-winged creatures who surround the throne of God, and who are referred to in Is. 6:2 (305a). Divine knowledge proceeds downward through the ranks to the lowest, the Angels, who minister to humanity:

1st:	Seraphim	2nd	Dominions	3rd	Principalities
	Cheribum		Virtues		Archangels
	Ophanim (Thrones)		Powers		Angels

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Marguerite makes frequent reference to the hierarchies of angels. Further reference is in chs. 72, 77, 100, 106, and 129.

5:2 Refers to the traditional cosmology, that the universe is composed of four elements: air, fire, water and earth, which influence the individual's character.

8:1 Cf. 1 Pet. 4:18.

9:1 In her description of the **via negativa** the compounded use of the double negative is a stylistic device commonly used by Marguerite to call attention to total nothingness. The English rendering is awkward, but it is equally so in the French.

9:2 An allusion to the scholastic tradition which endeavors to use human reason to uncover truth.

9:3 "plane de Verité," also found in Plato's **Phaedrus** (248): "The reason why the souls exhibit this exceeding eagerness to behold the plain of truth is that pasturage is found there, which is suited to the highest part of the soul; and the wing on which to soul soars is nourished with this". Cf. introd. 21; ch. 53.

10:1 The actives are to be understood in the patristic sense, that is, a life concerned with asceticism and the practice of the virtues.

10:2 The daughters of Jerusalem form the choir in the Song of Solomon, and are also mentioned in Is. 16:1 as "daughters of Zion."

10:3 "l'adnientie," cf 1:1.

11:1 William of St. Thierry gives this definition of contemplatives: ."..they love to stay inside and devote their leisure with all devotion to the contemplation of truth in charity; then when necessary sermons or duty compels, they go out without a moment's hesitation to give themselves to the practice of charity in truth" (**Golden Epistle**, par. 18).

11:2 These nine points are enumerated in ch. 5.

11:3 The phoenix, a mythological bird which rises forth from its own ashes, was used as a symbol of the Resurrection.

11:4 ."..le plus de ceste ame, que le moins d'elle mesmes." The "most" and the "least" are lit. trans. here and must be taken in the abstract sense. The "most" refers the Soul's absorption in God, while the "least" is what she does through her own efforts. This is a recurrent theme in the **Mirror** and will again be seen in chs. 12, 16, 23-24, 32 and 111.

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12:1 This opposition between "wheat" and "chaff" has a biblical origin (Mt. 3:12), and is again seen in chs. 82 and 121.

12:2 The theme of unappeasable love is also found in Hadewijch: "And this is a frightening life Love wants, that we must do without the satisfaction of Love in order to satisfy Love" (Letter 13, trans. by Hart).

13:1 Allusion to St. Augustine's statement, "Digige et fac quod vis" (In **Epistola Johannis ad Partos**, VII:8).

15:1 Most of this chapter was omitted in the Latin translations, which were probably composed for the purpose of Marguerite's trial and inquisition. While elsewhere the Soul is said to desire neither sermons, prayers, or masses (ch. 16), it is apparent that the Eucharist is central to Marguerite's spirituality. If this chapter had been read by her accusers they may not have ruled upon her as harshly as they did.

15:2 The "glorified ones" are further discussed in chs. 58, 74, 114 and 118 where "glorification" defines the seventh state "when we will be in glory which is beyond human understanding."

16:1 ."..et si ne scet neant de ce que Dieu a en elle de luy pour elle." The underlying meaning here refers to God's transcendent nature hidden within the human soul, also described in ch. 11 as "the most" in the soul as opposed to "the least" of herself. Cf. n. 11:3.

16:2 "celles qui mendient." Later the theme of begging will be discussed, but the béguines were known to beg when they were on their own or while traveling. Cf. introd. 7; chs. 96, 117.

17:1 Cf. n. 5:2.

17:2 On this "foundation," cf. Courtesy's reply, ch. 15.

19:1 On the two churches, cf. introd. 3 and ch. 43.

20:1 Cf. ch. 9.

20:2 On the recognition of spiritual companions cf. chs. 98 and 139.

21:1 Cf. ch. 6.

21:2 Cf. ch. 9.

21:3 The biblical theme of "God is Love" is central to the thought of the mirror and also to the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux. "Man says, 'I am God, and God is in me and we are one Spirit'" (Sermon 71; 2:6).

22:1 The eagle is a classical symbol of courage and power, and in medieval bestiaries the eagle is reported to fly higher than any other bird

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and not be overwhelmed by the rays of the sun. The bright rays of the sun represent Divine Light which is focused on the marrow of the high cedar, the enigmatic "tender shoot" of Ez. 17:22-24 which the Lord will break off to transplant to another land where the messianic line of David will flourish. The purification of Divine Sun is an important neo-platonic theme developed also in the writings of Dionysius. According to Dionysius, the more purified spiritual beings can receive more "glorious rays" which they pass on to inferior beings, and in this way the divine light is spread out to every being (**Celestial Hierarchies**, ch. 13). This image is further developed in chs. 80 and 90 of the **Mirror** where Marguerite amplifies the meaning to allude to the crossing of the Red Sea.

22:2 The opposition of love and fear recalls 1 John 4: "perfect love casts out fear," and the conclusion that "the one who fears is not perfected in love." This is a central theme in Bernard's writings.

22:3 "Elle est **commune** a tous par largesse de pure charité." The French "commune" carries a spiritual connotation of being in communion which the English "available" does not register. The feudal virtue of **largesse** is here wedded to a spiritual virtue of charity, a consistent theme throughout the **Mirror**. Cf. introd. 19-20.

22:4 Marguerite ties the feudal and courtly virtue of **courtoisie** to the **pure bonté** of God. Juliana of Norwich also spoke of God's nobility and courtesy in her **Revelations**.

23:1 "potences," play on words, "pillar" and "potion."

23:2 The theme of the inebriation of God is also seen in the writings of Pseudo Dionysius, Epistle 9, 1113c.

23:3 The theme of the soul as a soaring bird is beautifully developed by Mechtild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite may be borrowing from her poetry: "When a bird rests long on the ground, then its wings become weak, and its feathers grow heavy. Then it stretches upwards, ruffles its plumage and strains upwards toward the heavens until it feels the air and takes flight. The longer it flies, the more blissfully it soars, and scarcely returns to earth for nourishment. For the wings of love have quite removed its earthly desire. In the same way we should prepare to rise up on high. We should constantly turn the feathers of our longing towards God" (Bowie, 83).

24:1 "la droite franchise," lit. "strict" or "proper" freedom.

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24:2 Here Marguerite seems to be borrowing from Dionysius' symbolism of the sun as a topos for the purity and illumination of God (n. 22:1). Cf. **Celestial Hierarchies** 392, and **Divine Names** 640a.

25:1 Here and elsewhere Marguerite uses the classical image of fire to symbolize the mystical purification of the soul and its consummation with God. In Hebrews (12:29), God is a consuming fire, and in Luke (12:49) Jesus says he has come to cast fire on the earth. Matthew (3:11) speaks of a baptism of fire and in Acts (2:3) tongues of fire descended upon the disciples. Hadewijch also speaks of Love's fire devouring everything it touches (**Poems in Couplets** 16:94-96), and Marguerite may be revealing a prophetic vision of her violent death at the stake. Cf. introd. 28 and ch. 85.

32:1 "Discretion," in Middle French. Marguerite uses this term which comes from Richard of St. Victor, and is developed in his extended allegory, **The Twelve Patriarchs**, in which Joseph the dreamer is born of Rachel who is reason. He possesses discretion because he can interpret dreams. Following the Victorine model, Marguerite's personification of Discretion implies an Aristotelian moderation or golden mean: "nothing too much." "Discretion," here translated as Discernment, tempers the excess of virtue that leads to pride. It comes as a result of knowing ourselves, our own humility, and is a pre-condition to knowing God. Discretion leads to detachment which then leads to discernment of the will of God. Cf. Holmes, 151.

33:1 Marguerite's vision resembles St. Paul's account of being taken up in the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2) and the mystical experience of many other medieval visionaries such as Hildegard, Meister Eckhart and Marguerite of Oingt. As women were denied the priestly office their visions provided them with an authority which they otherwise lacked. Caroline Bynum in **Jesus as Mother** (ch. 5) has shown how women, through their visionary literature, could assume a priestly function that would be closed to them in real life. Cf. introd. 24.

36:1 The mystical theme of passing from the life of the virtues to the life of love is also found in Hadewijch's **Visions** (1,6,12, & 14) and in her **Poems in Stanzas**:

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To sublime Love
I have given away all that I am
Whether I lose or win, let all
That is owed be hers without diminution
What has happened now?
I am not mine (16:8).

39:1 "ordonnance."

40:1 Cf. Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14.

41:1 Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux who wrote, "So the Bridegroom, the Word, will have no need for the food of good works since all works must needs cease where wisdom is understood fully by all, for it is said, 'They who have little need of activity shall understand it' (Sir. 38:35)" (**Commentary on the Song of Songs** 72:2).

41:2 This sentence is obscure, perhaps because of omission. The Middle English reads "Such Souls neither desire nor will any of these."

42:1 The mystical paradox raised here is that in order to have "All" the Soul must give up everything. This tension between the "All" and the "all" is also found in Hadewijch:

Love comes and consoles us;
She goes away and knocks us down,
This initiates our adventure
But how one grasps the All with the all,
Alien rustics will never know (**Poems in Stanzas** 17:78-83).

43:1 "Voire, Saincte Eglise, dessoubz ceste Sainte Eglise." The existence of two churches was envisioned in the prophesies of Joichim de Fiore and by the Cathar heresies, who considered their church as holy and the established church as evil. Marguerite is not as extreme for she perceives the Greater Church guided by Love to be the foundation of the Little Church which is governed by reason. Cf. introd. 3, and ch. 43.

43:2 "parmi la glose de nos escriptures." In many medieval manuscripts one finds a small portion of text in the middle of a page surrounded by glosses, marginal notes in a different hand, which may exceed the text in length. This term will be used in the **Mirror** to express the teaching or hidden meaning which goes beyond the literal word. This meaning is understood by the initiates or the illuminated ones, but it confounds the reader who is literal-minded. This same distinction is inherent in St. Pauls contrast of the Spirit vs. the letter of the Law.

43:3 "borgne," blind in one eye. The theme of spiritual blindness is attributed to those who are governed by Reason, and derives from the

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scriptures: "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Mt 6:22-23). Marguerite may also be borrowing from Hugh of St. Victor (1096-1141) who wrote, "Their eye sees all, but it does not see itself...Men cannot perceive their faces...unless you bring forth a certain mirror of another kind, by which I can know and love the sight of my heart" (**Earnest Money**, 15). It is also found in the **Ecclesiastical Hierarchies** of Dionysius: "No one with weak eyes can safely look upon the rays of the sun" (2:392c).

43:4 "tout ainsi comme nous avons," lit., "completely as" we had it.

45:1 "le tout," translated as everything, all. Cf. n. 42:1.

47:1 Cf. Mt 6:22 "If therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light." Cf. n. 43:3.

47:2 Cf. Rev. 20.

48:1 These two replies are surmised from the context, for neither the the literal French nor the Latin are comprehensible. The Middle French text reads "Aussi le feroient-ils."

49:1 Cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-4.

50:1 The biblical theme of the believer being marked and sealed by God is well developed by Marguerite and other mystical writers. Among others St. Bonaventure wrote that "divine love transcends the mind but is nevertheless stamped on our minds" (**Itinerarium** n. 4 V 305). Hugh of St. Victor likens this imprinting process as a seal molds the wax on which it is pressed and takes on the virtues of the seal--if it is soft and pliable enough to assume them. For further elaboration of the seal metaphor, cf. Bynum, **Jesus as Mother** 97-8.

51:1 Cf. Esth. 15:9-15.

51:2 Meaning she no longer worships or prays.

52:3 The chamber of the beloved is an important medieval theme which was developed in the devotional literature. St. Bernard meditates deeply upon the Bridegroom's chamber in his commentary on the **Song of Songs**, and Hugh of St. Victor used the story of King Ahusuerus, (Esth. 2:1-4) as an allegory for the love of the Bridegroom for the Bride (Herbert, **Earnest Money**, 28, n.14). The name Ahasuerus means "door" and as Christ says "I am the door" (Jn. 10:7), the rich and powerful king becomes a type for Christ. Esther, in the **Mirror** is correspondingly a type for the Soul.

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52:1 "a ceste precieuse marguerite" Beyond the classical allusion to a pearl of great price, Marguerite may here be discretely signing the book.

52:2 Cf. Mt. 8:22.

53:1 "fons sans fons," lit., "bottom without bottom."

53:2 "tres noble pierre en la largeur du plain de vérité." This seems to describe a coat of arms, a jewel or stone on the field of a shield, but there is also a word-play on "plain of truth," cf. n. 9:3.

53:3 Cf. Jn. 3:16.

54:1 Marguerite will refer to three deaths the Soul must accomplish on the way to perfection. The first, the death to sin (ch. 60) and the second, mortification in the life of the spirit (ch. 64). The third death is understood by "those on the mountain." Cf. n. 65:1.

55:1 "gloses."

56:1 "**bougre**," in original, "bugger" would be a bit harsh here. Longchamps writes that the **bougre** originally referred to a member of a Bulgarian manichean sect of the tenth century, later being attributed to the Cathars and Albigensians, and was finally ascribed to all members of the Free Spirit Movement, from which Marguerite seems to be distancing herself here. Cf. n. 65:1, 253.

55:2 "affection d'esperit." The Soul is "affected" by God and undergoes a transformation, receiving the impression of God. God, however, remains unchanged for he is not "affected" by what he loves. The same use of the term is found throughout the writings of William of St. Thierry, notably in On Contemplating God.

57:1 "marriz" This word is best defined in ch. 133. It comes from the same root as the English "marred," and has a special meaning throughout the **Mirror**, errant, lost, blemished, wayward. Cf. introd. 22-23.

57:2 Cf. Heb. 4:12.

58:1 "mere" in French; "magistrum" in Latin.

58:2 "ouverture." Apart from the biblical expression of God as light, this image is also found in the **Golden Epistle** of William of St. Thierry as a light which is glimpsed for a passing moment (268). Cf. introd. 22.

58:3 "Loingpres" The far-off lord of the Prologue is now given a name, and Far-Near will be of increasing importance in the text. Far-Near , is considered by J.B. Porior to be a French equivalent of Hadewijch's

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Verre bi, "far-off-close at hand" (**Hadewijch d'Anvers**, 136). Also present is the influence of Hugh of St. Victor's **De arrha animae**, according to Colledge (**Jan van Ruusbroec**, 39-40).

58:4 "et tout sans elles."

59:1 "...ne scent nulle Ame dire de ceste precieuse closure, dont elle est obliée par l'adnientissement de la cognoissance de cel adnientissement rent a luy mesmes." An example of holy forgetting is found in **The Life of the Virgin Saint Beatrice of Ornacieux** where Marguerite of Oingt describes how God would reveal holy secrets to Beatrice which her listeners would immediately forget because God would not permit it (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, 57-8). Cf. ch. 10.

60:1 Referring to the four humors, according to Galen, which correspond to the four "elements" of ch. 5: choleric, due to bile; phlegmatic, due to lymph; melancholy, due to dark bile; and sanguine, due to blood. They influence the disposition to be willful, lazy, sad or frivolous.

60:2 "gloses."

61:1 "Je vous ay par mon Loingpres les erres envoiées." This line has been translated by Colledge and Marler as "I have sent you my bridal gifts by my Far-Near," linking the Middle French "erres" to the Latin "arrha" in Hugh of St. Victor's **De arrha animae** (39). The original "arrha" signified "earnest money," but in Middle Latin it came to designate gifts given at the time of betrothal (Herbert 11). Marguerites use of the word "erres" conveys both meanings. The bridegroom has paid off her debts, given a security payment, and has freed her from Reason (ch. 36) and in so doing has given her a betrothal gift, a token of their alliance which frees her from Reason's dominion and liberates her to attain full union with the Beloved. Of God's love for the betrothed, Hugh of St Victor writes: "As yet he has not wished to present himself to you, but he has sent his gifts and has given his pledge money, the bond of his love and the sign of his favor" (18). This text shows how Hugh of St. Victor linked the gift to the debt owed by the soul. "In order that you may always remember what you owe to him, do not prefer these gifts to the giver, but hold them dear because of him and through and above them love him" (17). Cf. ch. 80.

63:1 Cf. Mt. 6:28-33, Lk. 12:28-31.

64:1 The above lines attributed to Love in original, but it seems more

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likely from the context that Truth is speaking.

65:1 This is the same mountain which is found at the end of ch. 9, signifying the holy habitation of God found throughout the Psalms, in Zech. 8:3 and in Is. 2:2-3. Bernard also made extensive use of the mountain motif as a place of union and everlasting joy where many wish to reign with God but not suffer with him (Sermon 21:2, **Songs**).

66:1 The disappearance of the established Church as prophesied by Abbot Joachim de Fiore. Cf. introd. 3.

67:1 This expression of the Trinitarian doctrine is complementary to its expression in ch. 14. Longchamps suggests that this paraphrases the words of the Latran Council (1215) used against the Cathar and Albigensian heresies, and that it is used here by Marguerite to protect herself from a similar accusation (Cf. n.14, p 244).

68:1 Meister Eckhart also uses the term "asses" (Sermon 52) to refer to those people who know little of divine truth while being called holy on account of their external appearances. In his development of this theme Eckhart may be borrowing from Marguerite who, in turn may be inspired by the writings of William of St. Thierry who writes of the "animal man" in his **Golden Epistle** (p 25). William, in turn, was inspired by the writings of St. Paul (Rom 7:14; 15:27; 1 Cor. 3:1 and 9:11).

69:1 "oeuvres d'examples," probably refer to Saints' lives which were very popular and were used as examples to imitate.

69:2 "monstiers" may refer to congregations in churches or monasteries.

69:3 Cf. Gen 30:1-5; 35; 16-20; Ps 67:28. The example of Rachel and Benjamin was part of the spiritual discussion of the active vs. the contemplative traditions. Cf. chs. 10, 11; Longchamps, n. 69:2, 257.

69:4 Cf. Jn. 4:20-24.

70:1 "Author" added here as the context required another speaker.

70:2 Assuming Adam's sin of wanting to be like God and hiding himself because of his loss of innocence. For more on Adam's innocence before his sin, cf. ch. 94.

71:1 "gloses."

72:1 Cf. ch. 62.

72:2 On the angelic hierarchy of the **Mirror** cf. n. 5:1.

72:3 Cf. n. 55:2.

73:1 Cf. ch. 61 where the fifth state is described as free and the sixth as

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glorious.

73:2 The secret chamber, cf ch. 51.

74:1 "gloses."

74:2 Cf. chs. 98, 118.

74:3 "ses dangers ne peut mais fors vie glorieuse"

74:4 A play on words: "...c'est Marie de paix, et pource est Marie de paix, que Fine Amour la paist." The opposition between the active Martha and the contemplative Mary is further developed in chs. 86 and 124, and Mary is confused with Mary Magdelene in chs. 76 and 93. These allusions bear witness to the developing cult of Mary Magdelene in the thirteenth century.

75:1 Cf. Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:9-10; Lk. 9:28-36.

75:2 "...Et puis qu'il nous aprent ce, pourquoy ne le ferions nous?" The referrant "ce" is not clear. Perhaps it should read: "Since he has taught us to hide like his disciples at the Transfiguration, why wouldn't we do so?"

76:1 This narrative confuses Mary Magdalene with Mary, Martha's sister, and with the woman from whom seven demons were cast out, long a tradition, even to this day. Cf. Lk. 7:37-50, 8:2, 10:34-42; Jn. 11-12.

76:2 Cf. Mt. 26:64-75; Mk. 14:66-72; Lk. 22:54-62; Jn. 18:15-27.

76:3 Cf. Mt. 26:56; Mk. 14:50.

77:1 This will be explained in ch. 80 when Love pays off the Soul's indebtedness which symbolizes the union of the Soul with God. Cf. n. 61:1.

77:2 "la glose."

77:3 Cf. Ps. 91:11; Is. 6:2-6, Col. 1:16. There are references to the biblical hierarchy of angels throughout **Mirror**. Special order of the seven spirits is found in Rev. 1:4; 4:5, and of God flying on an angel in 2 Sam. 22:11 and Ps. 18:10.

78:1: Allusion to the messiah of Mal. 4:2.

79:1 Cf. Heb. 4:12; chs. 5, 94.

79:2 This allusion is explained in ch. 125.

80:1 "le chant et le deschante," "singing and non-singing," referring to polyphonic voices in plain chant. "Deschant" is a measured type of counterpoint in two-part plainsong.

80:2 Probably refers to the enigmatic "tender shoot" at the top of a cedar

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tree of Ez. 17:22-24, which the Lord will break off to transplant to another land where the messianic line of David will flourish. Marguerite amplifies this motif to allude to the crossing of the Red Sea into the Promised Land in chs. 80 and 90. Cf. n. 22:1.

80:3 Cf. notes 61:1 and 77:1.

80:4 Cf. n. 77:1, when Courtesy alludes to this union by making two things one.

80:5 "...en quoy je suis fondue" The liquification of the Soul is a mystical theme which Longchamps notes as the derivation from the **Song of Songs** 5:6 ("My soul is melted in his word"), expressing the immediate contact between God and the Soul and the union which brings the Soul into the Trinity, a source of divine love, and knowledge and recited below by Amazement. Cf. ch. 68.

81:1 Cf. note 78:1.

81:2 "dame de l'epouse de sa jouvence, Mal.:2:14,15. Cf. ch. 11; n. 78:1.

81:3 Cf. n. 78:1.

82:1 An allusion to court life described through ch. 85. In medieval times a person's lineage had to be pure in all four quarters in order for that person to be truly noble. This would be reflected on a shield, divided into quarters, which would bear the emblems of one's lineage in the form of symbols representing each ancestor. Cf. introd. 21-22.

82:2 "la glose"

82:3 Cf. chs. 12 & 121.

84:1 Far-Near, cf. introd. 20 and ch. 80.

84:2 "Il n'en gouste nul, qui ce n'est; ou en Dieu sans estre, ou Dieu en lui en l'estre."

84:3 "Entendez la glose"

84:4 "mal nourrist qui ne savoure," an obscure proverb.

85:1 "plaine pinte" Cf. n. 53:2

85:2 This passage offers an interesting parallel to the author's life which ended at the stake. Cf. introd. 28; ch. 25.

86:1 Versification not in original, added by translator.

89:1 The theme of nakedness is not to be taken lit., in the context of the **Mirror**, yet it was taken lit., by practitioners of the Free Spirit movement in the years following Marguerite's death.

90:1 "gasteroit" lit., "would waste"

91:1 Cf. Ex 2:24-31.

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91:2 "clarifiement" as opposed to glorification.

91:3 Cf. Jn. 8:8.

93:1 Cf. 76:1

93:2: "marrie et non mye Marie," play on words.

94:1 Cf. chs. 5 & 79

94:2 Cf. Jn. 14:12.

94:3 "la glose"

95:1 Cf. Heb. 12:1; 2 Tim 4:7, also ch. 110.

96:1 Versification not in original, added by translator.

96:2 Marguerite seems to be relating a phase in her own spiritual development, her beggarly, errant stage in which she was living a life of the spirit, but still encumbered by her will. The composition of the **Mirror** is part of this working out of her own spiritual dilemma and serves as a model for others who aspire to the same calling. Cf. introd. 7; chs. 16 and 117.

97:1 Cf. Lk. 23:43.

97:2 "Glosez ces mots." Here is one of M.P.'s definitions of this term.

98:1 Refers to ch. 74; also 9 and 118.

98:2 The keys to open the door (Rev 3:7-8). Cf. introd. 20-21.

98:3 Cf. chs 77, 100, 106 and 129

99:1 Cf. ch. 60.

100:1 Cf. Mt. 18:3, 19:4; Mk. 10:15; Lk. 18:17.

100:2 "glose"

101:1 Cf. Rev. 13:8. The theme of the Book of Life here embellishes the earlier theme of Far-Near's opening of what was assumed to be a door, which we now find to be the Book of Life. Cf. introd. 20-21.

101:2 "qui entend la verite des gloses!"

102:1 Cf. Gen. 2:7.102:2 Cf. Rom. 2; 8:21.

102:3 Cf. Ps. 7:6.

103:1 Cf. Prov. 24:16.

103:2 Cf. Rom. 6:19.

106:1 "paix" may be a spelling error, confused with "pays." "Land" fits better in this context than "peace".

109:1 "sons" refers to the spiritual heritage of the Christian believers as brothers or sisters of Christ (Rom. 8:14,15, 29). Cf. n. 128:3.

109:2 The theme of Christ as a mirror is found throughout the New Testament and most clearly expressed by St Paul: "And even if our gospel

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is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:3–4).

110:1 "engin," variously traslated throughout as "craft," "cunning," or "wiles."

110:2 The author seems to be describing two kinds of love here, one in which the soul is so ravished by Love that she is unaware of her own will and another in which the will has been annihilated and her love is perfected. They key to this confusing passage may lie in the Soul abiding in love as a preliminary state to Love abiding in the soul, a distinction which is made in ch. 7.

110:3 Cf. n. 95:1.

111:1 "en nient vouloir," a state of non-wanting or will-lessness.

111:2 "glosez."

111:3 "il vous ouvreroit," lit., "he would open to you."

111:4 "je ne le desveil mie" As in ch. 110, those who can hear and speak don't necessarily understand.

113:1 Cf. Jn. 14:12.

117:1 Recurrent theme of begging: Cf. introd. 7; n. 96:2.

117:2 Fragment missing from French, translated from the Latin.

117:3 "car le plus fort mue en lui le plus faible" (2 Cor. 12:9).

118:1 "Soul" in French; "Author" more appropriate to context.

118:2 mountain, cf. chs. 9, 74, 98.

118:3 "et checun degré a par estre son assise," lit., "each degree has its proper seat."

118:5 Fragment missing from French, translated from the Latin.

118:6 "car sa nature est maligne par l'inclination du nient dont nature est enclinée," lit., "for its nature is evil from Nature's inclination to nothingness."

118:7 "une abysme abysmee sans fons," lit., "bottomless abysmal abyss."

118:8 the paradoxical juxtaposition of the valley and mountain is finally resolved here. Cf. chs. 9, 74, 98, 118.

121:1 Cf. n. 12:1.

122:1 béguines, a sect in northern France, Germany, and Flanders of which critics theorize M.P. was a part, but here she seems to be distancing herself from them. Cf. introd. 5–8.

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123:1 "regars" Although "considerations" has been used consistently to translate this word, it should also be understood in a mystical sense to include "reflections," "visions," as one would see in a mirror, or as reflecting back from God. This meaning is clearly expressed in the last part of ch. 139.

123:2 Cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-2.

123:3 Cf. Jn. 16:7.

123:4 Cf. Is. 11:2-3.

124:1 Cf. Jn. 20:11-13.

124:2 Appocraphal legend of Mary Magdalene alluded to here. According to legend, she went to St. Baum and St. Maximum in Provence to till the land as a penance for her sins. So the metaphor of tilling the land has a basis in legend.

124:3 Cf. Is. 55:10, "giving seed for sowing and bread for eating," and 1 Cor. 9:10, "He who supplies seed to the sowing and bread for eating will multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

125:1 Cf. Jn. 1:29-37.

126:1 Cf. Lk. 1:28.

126:2 Cf. Lk. 1:35.

126:3 "espine," stickleback, a thorny fish.

126:4 Cf. Lk. 1:41.

126:5 Cf. Acts 2:4.

126:6 "comme estre en vain le ploy d'un petit meulequin qui est un petit ver hors de necessité"

128:1 Cf. Jn. 14:6.

128:2 Cf. Jn. 3:13.

128:3 Cf. Mt. 12:50; n. 109:1.

130:1 Cf. Jn. 1:3.

131:1 "et me mis en meditacion par comprendement de comparaison en consentement de volenté sans revance." These unrestrained speculations," repetative and convoluted as they seem, bring the writer to the conclusion that she is fretting herself uselessly over her "speculations" which may be akin to St. Paul's "speculations" in 2 Cor. 10:5, or Ps. 73:7, "letting the imaginations of the heart run riot."

131:2 This insertion borrowed from the English text. Neither the original

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nor the Latin versions make sense without it.

131:3 "Et toutefois toujours me rassailloit por avoir reponse."

131:4 "par quoi je n'aloye pas l'ambleure" lit., "amble away."

131:5 "breve et legere"; lit., "brief and light."

133:1 Cf. Gen. 3.

134:1 non-questioning, cf. ch. 81.

134:2 "Elle a passé la pointe du glaive." Cf. ch. 137:1.

134:3 From here on until ch. 137, trans. from English text.

136:1 Cf. ch. 69.

137:1 Cf. n. 134:2.

137:2 Here the French text resumes.

138:1 "et si a laissé trois, et a fait de deux ung," referring to the soul's return to her origin after the three lives and three deaths of chs. 53-54.

138:2 "lequel simple vouloir n'a point de fait en lui, depuis qu'il ot vaincu la necessité de deux natures, la ou vouloir fut donné pour simple estre." Seems to refer to the fifth state, ch. 118.

139:1 "Et ce savoir divin et ce repos m'enpeschoient la voie de mon pays, en me couvrant la matere, la ou je devoie prendre humilité, pour la mienne cognoistre." Unclear passage.

139:2 Cf. Gen.1:28.

139:3 "regars," cf. 123:1.

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